

BT 480

.N5

Copy 1

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. BT 480

Shelf N5

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



2561

THE
NEW TRIAL

OF THE

WITNESSES ;

OR, THE

RESURRECTION OF JESUS

CONSIDERED,

ON PRINCIPLES UNDERSTOOD AND ACKNOWLEDGED
EQUALLY BY JEWS AND CHRISTIANS ;

WITH AN

ENQUIRY INTO THE ORIGIN OF THE GOSPELS, AND
THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLES OF PAUL.



“The Lord Chief Justice said, the Defendant was not called upon to answer for any reasonable or fair discussion on the truth of Christianity in general or any of its particular tenets; the Law permitted that every subject, however sacred, should be freely, yet moderately and temperately, discussed.”

MRS. WRIGHT'S TRIAL, COURT OF KING'S BENCH, 1822.

LONDON : 1823.

PRINTED FOR JOHN HUNT, OLD BOND STREET, AND
TAVISTOCK STREET.

37480
.N5

WE 12 my 37

THE
NEW TRIAL,
&c. &c.

SINCE the suppression of Paine's Age of Reason, and the conviction of Carlile, the subject of revealed religion has engaged an uncommon degree of public attention; and men of all persuasions, convinced, however erroneous Paine's opinions may be, that a well grounded faith or belief in the Bible as the word of God can be the result only of a careful and candid examination of its contents, have tacitly agreed to rest the cause of religion no longer on the ravings of superstition and the false lights of the fanatic, but on the solid ground of reason and common sense; taking, as evidence, the testimony of faithful witnesses, and the authentic records which they have handed down.

On this principle Paley had already produced a work, which, although it be chiefly collected from the learned and industrious Lardner, is arranged with such judgment and talent as almost to supersede every other book on the evidence of Christianity.

Doctor Chalmers also, following the same plan, and professing the same object, has published a treatise, more remarkable for eloquence than sound reasoning; but the novelty of his argument compensates, with many persons, for its weakness, and although censured by some, even of his own brethren¹, it cannot be denied that the example he has given of free and manly discussion is highly laudable and worthy of imitation.

Among a multitude of puerile and trifling productions published by the various religious societies, a few of a very different description, written by persons of distinguished merit, have been revived and circulated. Of these, Bishop Sherlock's "Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection", and Lord Littleton's "Conversion of Paul," are particularly deserving of notice. The "Trial of the Witnesses" is upon an excellent plan:

¹ Dr. Mearns, of Aberdeen.

it was intended as a defence of the miracles of Jesus against the attacks of Woolston. It was not then become the fashion to cry down, as blasphemy, every work which had the least appearance of militating against the established tenets; and the Bishop, to whom the tract is ascribed, rightly judging that if Christianity be founded in truth, it could sustain no injury from a fair and rational investigation, determined to submit the question of the resurrection to the strictest scrutiny, on the principles of a judicial enquiry before a Court of Justice. Accordingly the judge is seated, the jury are chosen, counsel on each side is appointed, and the witnesses called in and examined; thus, he affirms, the crucifixion, the burial, and the rising again, are all proved by competent evidence; but the point which he labours most to establish, is with regard to the sealing the stone.

Woolston had insinuated that the sealing of the stone implied a compact entered into, not to break the seal until the time appointed when the priests were to attend for that purpose; but the Bishop insists there was only one party to this proposal; it was the act of the Jewish priests alone, and the Almighty was under no obligation to consult them as to the propriety of the time when he was to call Christ from the tomb.

On this point, and on this alone, I may venture to say, rests the whole weight of the Bishop's argument; and here, as is to be expected, he obtains a complete triumph. Accordingly, after both counsel have been heard, and the judge has summed up the evidence, the jury bring in their verdict Proved. Thus he concludes the resurrection of Christ to be established on grounds the most satisfactory and incontrovertible.

Lord Littleton, who was himself a judge, handles his subject, "The Conversion of Paul", in a similar manner, and with much ingenuity and eloquence shows the great improbability of Paul's being either an impostor or enthusiast. The first he could not be from the unprecedented toils and sufferings he underwent, without the least prospect of advantage or reward; the latter it is impossible to think him, from the soundness of his reasoning, his resolution and firmness, and the cool deliberation which he manifests on all occasions. This is a work of great merit and extremely plausible, a work which I had long considered unanswerable. However that may be, the lovers of truth are under infinite obligation to these men, for having at last conducted them into the right path, after having for ages wandered in the thorny wilderness of superstition and false philosophy. And indeed, if the truth of the Gospel can be demonstrated on rational

principles, the extreme imprudence of attempting to obtain the consent of mankind by any other means will be readily admitted ; for it has ever appeared to me, that the belief which we force upon ourselves without evidence, or in opposition to the evidence of facts,—the faith which has no other foundation than an indolent and careless assent, like that of the Mahometan, who implicitly believes whatever is contained in the Koran,—is of no value, and can be of little duration, especially in an age like the present, when common sense and reason are constantly appealed to in every question of difficulty, and made the arbiters in all disputes whether in religion or philosophy. And it is the boast of our divines, both from the pulpit and the press, that Christianity courts no concealment, nor dreads investigation. On the contrary, some of its best friends invite the strictest scrutiny, and require that it be probed to the bottom ; while others assert, that, it has already undergone the most severe ordeal, and has come out like gold from the furnace ; or as the oak, beaten by the tempest, strikes its roots the deeper, so revelation has acquired new strength and vigour even from the attacks of its enemies. Neither the eloquence of Rousseau nor the wit of Voltaire, the talents of Bolingbroke, nor the philosophy of Hume, the learning of Gibbon, nor the genius of Paine ; nor all these together, aided by the powers of darkness, have been able to prevail against it.

“ The Bible Sir”, says the Bishop of Landaff to Paine, “ has withstood the learning of Porphyry, and the power of Julian, to say nothing of the Manichean Faustus ; it has resisted the genius of Bolingbroke, and the wit of Voltaire, to say nothing of a numerous herd of inferior assailants, and it will not fall by your force. You have barbed anew the blunted arrows of former adversaries ; you have feathered them with blasphemy and ridicule ; dipped them in your deadliest poison, armed them with your utmost skill, shot them against the shield of faith with your utmost vigour ; but, like the feeble javelin of aged Priam, they scarcely reach the mark, and will fall to the ground without a stroke².”

Be this as it may, I am persuaded that the religion which is founded on truth can sustain no injury from a calm and candid examination ; and, as I am desirous of seeing the following arguments fairly met and answered by arguments equally calm and dispassionate, I now, for that purpose, present them to the public. They are the sentiments of an ingenuous friend now no more ; and although some of them may appear rather fanciful, there are others which I have never been

² Letter IX.

able fully to answer, either to his satisfaction or my own. But one argument more difficult to resist than all the rest, is, what he repeatedly urged, that a fair and full discussion of this subject has never yet been allowed; for, said he, the apprehension of legal interference and the fear of popular odium operate as effectually, in Britain, towards the suppression of every sentiment which appears in the smallest degree to militate against the prevailing tenets, as the terrors of the Inquisition in Spain, or the tortures of the rack in Turkey; and to talk of decent discussion is only a pretext, for nothing is accounted decent which is level to common apprehension, and to appeal to the understandings of men, in plain and intelligible language, is called blasphemy. We now proceed in his own words.

I have observed, that Christians in general, when speaking upon the leading doctrines of revelation, assume an air of mystery, their faculties become suspended, imagination, or the passions, seize the rein which reason has resigned, and those very men who, in the ordinary affairs of life, display considerable penetration and sagacity, do, on this subject, lay aside their usual precaution, and receive, without examination or doubt, matters of the highest importance. Yet religion ought, surely, to be our first concern; it is a thing which we are not to receive, implicitly, at the hand of any man, but which every man ought to examine for himself: "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." "This may be understood," says Dr. McKnight, "in a more general sense, as it requires Christians in all ages, before they receive any religious doctrine, to examine whether it be consonant to right reason and the word of God." Benson remarks, "what a glorious freedom of thought do the apostles recommend, and how contemptible in their account is a blind and implicit faith. May all Christians use this liberty in judging for themselves on matters of religion, and allow it to one another, and to all mankind."

Thus we see it generally admitted by all rational Christians, and even commanded by the apostles themselves, to receive no doctrine without examination; but the great question is, what rule are we to follow in this enquiry?

The grand fundamental articles of our faith, are, that Jesus, a humble peasant, reputed the son of Joseph a carpenter, residing at Galilee, near Judea, but in truth the only Son of God, proved his claim to this high character by many great miracles, and finally, having suffered a cruel and ignominious death, rose from the grave, and ascended into heaven before innumerable witnesses.

Now I know of no other method to proceed here, than that in which all matters of importance are investigated before a Court of Justice. On a trial of life and death, the Jury attend to the most minute circumstances, the witnesses are called, the oath is administered, their name and personal identity are carefully ascertained, their character and motives are scrupulously weighed, and if they have received any promise or have any prospect of reward, their testimony is entirely rejected.

On this principle then I mean to examine the Gospel-History, confining myself however to the resurrection of Jesus and his ascension into Heaven; and shall now proceed to enquire, First, What evidence the Gospel affords of the supernatural resurrection of Jesus? Who was present when he left the sepulchre? And, what witnesses have come forward to prove his ascension into heaven?

Secondly, Whether the books, called the four Gospels, were written by the persons whose names they bear, and at what period they first appeared?

Thirdly, Whether the Gospels were known when Paul wrote his Epistles, and what share he had in publishing this marvellous history?

Now after what we have heard of witnesses of the resurrection, it is surely natural to expect, that some one or more individuals should have come forward to declare what they knew of this affair; and if we dispense with this declaration being on oath, are we not entitled to look for something of the same positive, public, and personal testimony that Paul gives, respecting the light which he saw, when going to Damascus? Instead of which, we have no one individual who saw Jesus rise from the tomb, nor have we one individual who says, expressly and for himself, that he saw him ascend into heaven. And here I earnestly solicit the attention of the reader; for although the subject has been so often discussed, and the texts I shall have occasion to quote are familiar to every Christian, yet the present view of the subject, I am persuaded, will be found as new as it is interesting, and little more will be necessary, on my part, than merely to bring the words of the Evangelists under the eye of the reader.

And, first of the resurrection:—"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene, early, while it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre; then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said unto them, they

have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they both ran together, and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre; and he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself³."

With this account Mark and Luke correspond exactly, only with the difference, that what Peter and John observed to be the linen clothes, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, perhaps, "it being early, and yet dark" took for a young man. "And entering into the sepulchre they saw a young man sitting on the right hand, clothed in a long white garment; and they were afraid, and they went out quickly from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed⁴". Luke says, "they, (the Marys,) entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus; and as it came to pass, as they were very much perplexed thereabout, two men stood by them in shining garments⁵".

Now with the exception of this trifling variance between the narrative of Luke and Mark, where, by the one, the women are said to have seen two men in shining garments, and by the other, they saw only one young man, clothed in white; while Peter and John declare they saw only the linen clothes lying in two parcels: except this trifling difference, which it is not my design to dwell upon or to magnify, these three Evangelists agree, exactly, in proving that no person was present when Jesus left the sepulchre.

But Matthew tells a quite different story. "In the end of the sabbath came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre; and behold there was a great earthquake, for the Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it; and his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him, the keepers (meaning the guards) did quake and became as dead men⁶." At the 63d verse of the preceding chapter we are told, "The Chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver, while he was yet alive, said, after three days I will rise again; command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples should come by night and take him away, and say unto the

³ John xx. ver. 1. ⁴ Mark xvi. ver. 5 and 8. ⁵ Luke xxiv. ver. 3 and 4.

⁶ Matthew xxviii.

people, he is risen from the dead, so that the last error will be worse than the first; Pilate said unto them ye have a watch, go your way, make it as fast as you can, so they went and made the sepulchre fast, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

Now here we cannot but admit there is a very material difference, three out of the four, say there were no witnesses, the other, Matthew, says there were; but what is still more worthy of notice is, that the witnesses to which he refers, deny the fact, saying, "his disciple came by night and stole him away⁷," for none of the other three say a single word about the guard, the sealing of the stone, or the angel descending and rolling it away.

But silence, says a great author, is no contradiction⁸: well then we shall admit, for a moment, that Matthew is correct, that the guards, of which he speaks, were actually present on this occasion; we shall even suppose they are ready to come forward, and declare, that "an angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone." Yet what use can we make of this? Would any Court in Christendom receive it as a proof of Christ's miraculous resurrection, when they had already said, "that his disciples came by night and stole him away?" Therefore, whether present or absent, I apprehend the evidence of these men is entirely out of question. At the same time we may observe, they never evinced the least disposition to retract, so that we are still left to enquire who is the witness who declares, that an angel came down from heaven and rolled away the stone. Who is he? What is the name of the person who witnessed the great agitation of this guard, "who became like dead men?" there was no body present but themselves, and by the account of Mark, Luke, and John, they have no existence; or by Matthew's own account, they are perjured men and cannot be listened to; yet one of these men would have been a most important witness, his single, his candid, honest testimony, would have been of more value than the report of the whole four Evangelists, who were not present; and if the evidence of one be so important, what shall we say if the whole guard had come forward? And instead of saying, that his disciples came and stole him away while they slept, they had unanimously declared that an angel descended from heaven, and in great majesty rolled away the stone. We are told they were bribed; but, had they not witnessed a most imposing sight? Paul's vision was not more striking; yet, what bribe

⁷ Matthew xxviii. ver. 11.

⁸ Bishop Watson.

would have induced him, what bribe could have induced any man, much less a company of men, one and all, not only to conceal this terrible truth, but even to lie to the Almighty, while they yet trembled at the remembrance of his awful visitation?

Judas, be tranquil, lay not violent hands upon thyself; thou knewest⁹ not that thou hadst betrayed the Lord of Glory: let thy wounded spirit rest: but conscience, faithful monitor. He goes and hangs himself! But these men feel no remorse; they sin against the clearest light; for while prostrate on the earth, which yet quaked under them; and while the rays of glory that darted from the heavenly messenger, yet dimmed their sight; they dared to meditate the horrid treason! Not treason against an earthly monarch but against the Majesty of Heaven!

But let us not terrify our imagination with phantoms; such men never existed; let us approach them once more and try if they be tangible, we are not on fairy ground. I say then, had these guards actually witnessed this scene, for it is impossible to conceive they could either conceal or disguise it, their testimony would have been of more importance than even that of Paul, not only, because several witnesses are less liable to be imposed upon than one, nor merely because each man was a check upon the other, but because the question to which their evidence refers, is of infinitely more importance in itself; for let this point be established, the miracles are all established, and the ascension into heaven may reasonably be expected as the consequence!

One word more and we shall dismiss them. Now is it possible to suppose that any bribe, threat, or punishment, could have induced the whole of these men to suppress what they saw at the tomb, overwhelmed with terror, as they are represented to have been, at the descent of the angel, can we suppose that an impression would have been so soon removed from their minds? It is impossible! Surely then an account so much in opposition to every principle of human action is to be received with great caution on the authority of one historian, especially when unsupported by the testimony of the other three. But, we are told that the silence of the rest, is no contradiction of Matthew's report; but is not their silence a strong presumptive proof that they were ignorant of the circumstance? But could men, divinely inspired, be ignorant of a thing of so

⁹ Peter says, Acts iii. ver. 17, "That the Jews were ignorant of the extent of their crimes. Now brethren! wot that through ignorance," &c.

much importance? And if they were not ignorant of it, what motive could have induced them to suppress it in their narrative?

However, I think it will appear pretty satisfactory to every reader, that Matthew's story of the sealing the stone, and setting a watch, is not to be placed in the balance against what may be so clearly inferred from the narrative of the other three.

"Joseph of Arimathea" says Mark, "bought fine linen and took him (Jesus) down from the cross, and laid him in a sepulchre, which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre, and Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, observed where he was laid¹⁰." "And when the Sabbath was past, Mary, &c. brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him¹¹." Now here is Mary, whose love to Jesus appears so conspicuous throughout the whole of this narrative: Mary, who was a melancholy spectator at his crucifixion, and watched with eager solicitude every motion of Joseph and Nicodemus, when they took him from the cross, and laid him in the tomb; if she and the other persons who accompanied her, had known, as they could not fail to know, that the stone was sealed, and a guard placed at the tomb, would they have purchased spices and come with such confidence of being admitted to the body, saying, as they approached, "Who shall roll, us, away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" for they seem to know of no other obstacle but the "*great stone*", which Joseph had placed there.

What, then shall we say of the story of sealing the stone and setting a guard, only this much, without impiety, there are three to one against it; but we shall have occasion to advert to this subject again, when it will appear by Matthew's own evidence, that his brethren are right with respect to the absence of witnesses, and that the *precaution* of placing a guard, was quite *superfluous*.

Although it was not my intention to say a single word about the miracles of Jesus, yet the raising of Lazarus is so much in point, as it regards the question, whether the silence of three witnesses upon a subject of great importance that ought to be equally known to them all, implies any contradiction of the evidence of a fourth, by whom it is reported. Now John is the only one of the four Evangelists, who mentions the raising of Lazarus from the dead the whole story is most minutely detailed in the eleventh chapter to which I beg leave to refer, as I have room only for a faint outline.

¹⁰ Mark xv. ver. 46.

¹¹ Mark xvi. ver. 1.

A person named Lazarus of Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, lay sick; he was the brother of that Mary, who anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped them with her hair, and it is said that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus; but when he heard that Lazarus was ill, instead of going directly to visit him, "he abode," says the text, "two days still in the same place," saying to those about him, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to the intent that ye might believe." "But when Jesus had come, he found that Lazarus had been in the grave four days already¹²." "And Jesus wept," but when they had taken away the stone where the dead was laid, "Jesus lifted up his voice and said, Father, I thank thee that thou has heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always, but because of the people that stand by. I said it that they may believe that thou hast sent me, and when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth, and he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot and with grave clothes and his face was bound about with a napkin, and Jesus saith, loose him and let him go."

This is surely one of the most stupendous miracles that ever was presented to the view of an astonished world, and if the weight of the evidence ought to be proportioned to the incredibility of the event, the raising of Lazarus from the dead requires to be better authenticated than any of Jesus's miracles.

But upon what principle is it to be accounted for, that of the four divinely inspired historians of the Life of Christ, one only has made any, the least, allusion to the raising of Lazarus, what could induce Matthew, Mark, and Luke, to suppress all mention of this extraordinary fact; either they were ignorant of it, or they were not; but they could not be ignorant independently of their inspiration of what was known to all Jerusalem. What motive then could they have for concealing what they knew would redound so much to the honour of their Master? Negligence it could not be, the negligence would be criminal for they were aware that a fact of so extraordinary a nature required the sanction of their names, and the whole weight of their authority to make it believed: nor can we suppose it possible that they could have been ashamed of it, because it did not produce the effect for which, it appears to have been designed. I am glad for your sake, says

¹² This appears to be rather loosely worded, for he is said to have remained only two days after he heard that Lazarus was ill, but this may be an error in transcribing, which with the other objections, of, why did he weep, when he had just said he was glad, and knew what he was about to do, I leave to the small critics, thinking these, and similar objections, of little importance to the main question.

Jesus, that I was not here to the intent that ye might believe¹³; indeed, from the great preparation with which it was got up, it appears that Jesus had intended this as a last effort to convince the people of Jerusalem of his divine mission, yet, unhappily it produced a quite contrary effect, for their indignation against him was increased in a ten-fold degree; so that instead of producing conviction in their minds, it ultimately proved fatal to himself; for we are told, that “many of the Jews, which came to Mary, and had seen these things which Jesus did, believed on him, but some of them *went their ways* to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done¹⁴.” Then from that day forth, they took counsel together to put him to death. Jesus, therefore, walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence into a country near to the wilderness into a City, called Ephraim, and there abode with his disciples¹⁵.”

Thus we see John is very minute in his account of this notable miracle, while the other three are entirely silent; so here, as in the former instance, the silence of these three witnesses, which we in vain attempt to account for, if it be not a direct negative to the story of the fourth, may, at least, be considered a slight discord designed, no doubt, to improve the harmony of the Gospels.

Let us now proceed to examine the evidence of Christ's ascension into heaven.

We hear it often repeated that the resurrection of Christ is the grand foundation of the Christian's faith; but it must be carefully observed, that it is not the resurrection simply considered, to which the importance is attached; because, that might have been natural; it is the ascension into heaven, which must have been supernatural, to which the whole weight of the evidence must be applied; and without entering into the question with Hume, Campbell and Paley, whether miracles be capable of demonstration; there can be little doubt that every man's belief will be in proportion to the strength of the evidence, for, although we may, with the lips, pronounce darkness light, and light darkness; yet our belief will not be changed, the mind will not become a party to such perversion; like a pure mirror, it cannot reflect a false image: it may, indeed, be sullied by passion or prejudice, but when free from the contagion of folly and vice

¹³ Immediately after this it is said, John xii. ver. 36 and 37, “These things spake Jesus, and departed, and hid himself from them; but though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.”

¹⁴ John xi. ver. 45.

¹⁵ John xi. ver. 53.

its reflections will always be just; therefore as the belief or disbelief of any proposition, does not appear to possess either merit or demerit in itself, all that can be required of us in the investigation of important truths, is to preserve ourselves free from bias, and to pay every possible attention to the proof.

“We do not” says Paley, “assume the attributes of the Deity, or the existence of a future state, to prove the reality of miracles, that *reality must be proved by evidence*¹⁶.”

Let us therefore call Matthew and John, who are supposed to have been eye witnesses of the fact, as no other can regularly be received¹⁷. Matthew says, “As the women departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring the disciples word, Jesus met them, saying, all hail, and they came and held him by the feet and worshipped him; then Jesus said unto them, go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me¹⁸.” “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee *into a mountain*, where Jesus had appointed them, and when they saw him they worshipped him, *but some doubted*¹⁹.” So after informing us that Jesus commanded them to teach all nations Matthew concludes his narrative without saying a word, about the ascension of Jesus into heaven, nor does he so much as tell us what became of him. But let us hear John, who was also a disciple, and an eye witness; he informs us very circumstantially of Jesus having appeared to them several times after his crucifixion, and the last time they saw him, Simon Peter, Thomas, called Dittymus, Nathaniel of Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples, were fishing upon the Sea of Tiberias. Jesus stood on the shore, but they knew not that it was Jesus, until he said, “Children, have ye any meat²⁰?” But having none, they ran and got some fish, and while they prepared it upon a fire at the shore, Jesus as it appears, being hungry, called to them, “come and dine,” accordingly they all dined together, Jesus partaking with them, and after some conversation, which seems to have given offence to Peter, Jesus having repeatedly asked him, “lovest thou me more than these,” meaning, as Peter, perhaps supposed, the fish. John concludes like Matthew, without saying a word about his ascension into heaven, with

¹⁶ Paley's Evidences, page, 2.

¹⁷ Eusebius states on the authority of Climens, of Alexandria, and all the early writers, that Matthew and John are the only Apostles of our Lord who have left any written account of his life.

¹⁸ Matthew xxviii. ver. 8. ¹⁹ Matthew xxviii. ver. 16. ²⁰ John xxi. ver. 5.

this difference only, that instead of meeting them in a mountain in Galilee, this interview, which appears to have been the last, was upon the coast of the Lake of Tiberias, he however, adds something about "the disciple whom Jesus loved," which popular credulity, has converted into the story of the "Wandering Jew." "If I will," says Jesus, "that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me;" but whether they followed him, or not, or where he went the historian does not inform us.

The sincere and honest enquirer, may, by a short and easy process, receive full satisfaction on this subject by reading the two last chapters of each of the Evangelists and comparing them with those of the rest, and if he has ever been upon a jury, or thinks himself qualified to act as a jurymen, he will be at no loss to decide: indeed, whatever attention he may have given to his bible, he will scarcely believe untill he he has made such reference, that neither Matthew nor John, the only two of the four evangelists, who are said to have been present at Christ's ascension into heaven, have spoken of this event. To confess the truth, when I first read "Bishop Shirlock's Trial of the Witnesses," I had no suspicion of any defect in the evidence, and every Christian, I believe, thinks as I did, that all the important doctrines, especially those which are necessary to salvation, are specifically contained in each of the leading Evangelists, namely, Matthew and John, for Mark and Luke are not to be considered in the light of disciples, or eye witnesses. Michaelles observes, and with him, Lardner, Watson and Paley, agree "that St. Luke being a Heathen by birth, was neither one of the seventy disciples, nor an eye witness of Christ's works." Of Mark, he says, "St. Mark, considered in a human light, was a very credible witness of the life of Christ, but the question is whether his book be of divine authority, since he was not one of the apostles, and so is destitute of the argument on which the authority of most of the books of the New Testament are founded."²¹ The Bishop of Landaff also in reply to Paine, says, "In this place you reckon Luke as one of the eleven, and in other places you speak of him as an eye witness of the things he relates, you ought to have known that Luke was no apostle, and he tells you himself in the preface to his Gospel, that he wrote from the testimony of others. If this mistake," (continues the Bishop,) "proceeds from your ignorance, you are not a fit person to write comments on the Bible, and I cannot admit that there

²¹ Michaelles Introductory Lectures, page 195 and 199.

is one of all the numerous priests and parsons, (of whom you speak) Bishops, and all, so ignorant as to rank Luke the Evangelist among the Apostles of Christ²²."

Thus it appears that Mark and Luke were not present at the ascension of Christ, nor on any of those important occasions to which their history refers. Now with respect to the competency of those witnesses; let us hear Mr. Lock, "I think it will not be amiss," says he, "to take notice of a rule observed in the law of England, which is, that though the attested copy of a record be good proof, yet the copy of a copy, never so well attested, and by never so credible witnesses, will not be admitted as a proof in judicature, this is generally approved as reasonable, and suited to the wisdom and caution to be used in our enquiry after material truths that I never yet heard of any one who blamed it; this practice, if it be allowable in decisions of right and wrong, carries this observation along with it, namely, that any testimony the further off it is from the original truth, the less force and proof it has; a credible man, vouching his knowledge of it, is a good proof, but if another, equally credible, do witness it from his report, the testimony is weaker, and a third that attests the hearsay of a hearsay, is yet considerably less; so that in traditional truths, each remove weakens the force of the proof, and the more hands the tradition has passed through, the less strength and evidence does it receive from them²³."

These observations of the great Mr. Lock are so much in point, that I thought it indispensable towards a right decision on this important question to submit them to the reader, before entering upon the examination of the other two Evangelists, Mark and Luke, they not having been, as already shewn, either disciples of Jesus, or eye witnesses of his ascension.

However, when the report began to prevail, that Christ had been seen alive after his crucifixion, and after Paul's conversion, when his sublime and irresistible letters became known to the world, a very strong disposition existed, to lead men to believe that the disappearance of Jesus was supernatural; accordingly Mark, who attended Paul in his perigrinations, and who is supposed to have made an abridgement of Matthew's Gospel, seems to have perceived the defect, and instead of abridging, has, in this instance, improved upon his author, by supplying what he has omitted, namely, that Jesus was carried into heaven.

²² Watson's Apology, Letter viii.

²³ Lock, Book vi. chap. 6.

“Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him as he said unto you²⁴.” Jesus, having accordingly met them there, as we are left to infer, for it is not distinctly stated where it was, and having commanded them to go and teach all nations, as we have seen above, the historian adds, “So then, after the Lord had spoken *unto them*, he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God.” Now all that appears wanting here, although this is not very precise, is to get *them*, that is Matthew and John, or any of his disciples who were present, to confirm this statement.

But Luke, who was also the pupil and companion of Paul speaks with more confidence. He says, “he led them out as far as Bethany, and it came to pass while he lifted up his hands and blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried into heaven.” But in the first chapter of the Acts, of which Luke is also supposed to be the author, it is said “he was seen of them forty days after his resurrection,” and commanded them “not to leave Jerusalem. And having spoken these things, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.” Now although the evidence of Luke, like that of Mark, be objectionable on the ground of his not having been present; yet it might be considered as corroborative proof, if it corresponded with the testimony of eye witnesses; but Matthew says, he commanded them to meet him in Galilee, while Luke, in the Acts, says, that “he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem,” and in his Gospel, “he led them out as far as Bethany.” Now Bethany is about two miles from Jerusalem, but Galilee is about eighty miles from that City.

However, not to insist upon these minute differences, as it is of little importance for us to enquire from what particular spot Jesus ascended into heaven, provided the fact be proved by a sufficient number of credible witnesses. I beg once more to observe, that the testimony of Matthew and John, is the chief thing we ought to attend to, as no other could be received in a Court of justice; and that they should be silent upon the subject, is certainly very remarkable. If they saw him ascend into heaven, they could not omit to mention it, the omission, as we said before, would be very culpable; and if this argument appears of great weight in the case of Lazarus, how infinitely more important does it not appear, when applied to Christ's ascension into heaven? Besides, is it possible that Matthew and John, who were eye witnesses,

²⁴ Mark xvi.

should stand in need to be informed upon the subject by Luke and Mark, who were not eye witnesses? Dr. Paley says, "the Gospels which bear the names of Mark and Luke, although, not the narrative of eye witnesses, are, *if genuine*, removed from that only by one degree²⁵." And we may observe, that this one degree, removes them as far from all title to appear as witnesses in this case, as if they were placed at the opposite side of the circle, because their testimony is not confirmed by Matthew and John, from whom they profess to have received their information. What then shall we say that these two last mentioned Evangelists were too conscientious to insert any thing in their report but what they had seen: if so their testimony must be allowed to possess the more weight; therefore if we cannot have the benefit of their evidence in support of Christ's ascension, that evidence will certainly be received with less suspicion upon another very important subject, namely, that of Jesus having *appearing alive after his crucifixion*; and although I cannot go the full length of some writers, who, whether they find harmony or discord in the sacred text, esteem it equally a proof of divine inspiration; I must, however, agree with Paley in thinking that the want of harmony among the Evangelists, on some points, has a tendency to confirm their testimony on those wherein they are all agreed, as it shews there was no concert or communication of design, and it is very remarkable that while we find the narrative of the one so little calculated to corroborate that of the other on the subject of the resurrection and ascension there should be such uniformity in their account of Jesus having appeared alive again after his crucifixion. On this point they all agree, and their testimony is confirmed by strong circumstantial evidence; for whether we say, with Matthew Mark and Luke; "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre;" or with John, that Mary Magdalene came alone; or choose to say with Luke, that the Marys came with other women who had accompanied him from Galilee, or with this last and Mark, that they came with spices which they had prepared to anoint the body, it is evident their testimony is fundamentally the same, though differing in terms, only so far as honest witnesses are supposed to do who have not heard each other's declaration; whether we say with Matthew and Mark that Jesus ordered his brethren to meet him on a mountain in Galilee, or with Luke, that he

²⁵ Evidences, page 79.

appeared to two disciples going to Emaus, before he appeared to the eleven at Jerusalem, or with John, that he appeared again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, being the third time; or with Luke in the Acts, that he showed himself alive by many infallible proofs, being seen of them for forty days: or believe with Paul, that he was seen of more than five hundred brethren at once, of which last indeed we have no evidence; there is, notwithstanding this variance, such a general concurrence upon the main point as must convince us, at least, that a very general rumour did prevail, of his having been seen alive after his crucifixion; what else could have alarmed the jealousy of the Chief Priests, against the party whose leader was now no more, and who could occasion them no more uneasiness? What else could induce them to employ an agent, like Saul of Tarsus? And that his zeal should have been inflamed to such a high degree, could only arise from the general prevalence of the report. "As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and hauling men and women, committed them to prison²⁵;" and his sudden change of sentiment on seeing the light and hearing the sound or words which he imagined²⁷ he heard, (if we allow no more) on going to Damascus, is a proof, how much his mind had been occupied with the subject: "I persecuted this way unto death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women, and also the high priest, doth bear me witness, from whom, also, I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring them which were there bound to Jerusalem to be punished; and it came to pass as I made my journey and was come nigh unto Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light around me and I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice, saying unto me, Saul, Saul! why persecutest thou me? And they that were with me, saw indeed the light and were afraid, but heard not the voice of him that spoke to me²⁸."

It is true it is said in another place, "the men which journeyed with him stood speechless hearing a voice but seeing nothing²⁹;" but this does not affect my argument, for suppose with Lord Littleton there were nothing supernatural in the ap-

²⁵ Acts viii. ver. 3.

²⁷ Lord Littleton, in his conversion of St. Paul, page 54, says, "I shall suppose it an extraordinary meteor, &c. and fear, grounded on ignorance, might make them imagine it a vision from God, nay, even the voice or sound which they heard in the air might be an explosion attending this meteor." &c.

²⁸ Acts xxii. ver. 4.

²⁹ Acts xi. ver. 7.

pearance, suppose it only a vivid flash of lightening which deprived him of his sight, suppose the electric shock had even deprived him of sense for a time, and when his faculties began to operate again he imagined, as we do in a dream, that he had heard the words, which I am willing to believe he truly says he did hear; but as we say men generally dream of what most occupies their waking thoughts, so Paul's mind on this supposition must have been seriously impressed with the report of Christ's resurrection; and he is an important, though unwilling, witness even before his conversion of the existence of such report.

Doctor Paley observes: "Nothing I apprehend which a man does not himself hear or see, can be more certain than this point; I do not mean that nothing can be more certain than that Christ rose from the dead, but that nothing can be more certain than that his apostles and the first teachers of Christianity gave out that he did so:" and a little further on he adds: "It was not one person but many who saw him, not only separate but together, not only by night but by day, not at a distance but near, not once but several times; they not only saw him but touched him, conversed with him, ate with him, examined his person to satisfy their doubts³⁰."

Thus I think, although we should not admit that all the witnesses are sufficiently explicit, or sufficiently identified, to establish a complete proof of Christ's supernatural resurrection, yet there appears pretty satisfactory evidence, at least, that a very general rumour had got abroad of his having been seen alive after his crucifixion. On this ground Christians take their stand; Ditton, Lardner, Pearce, Watson, Paley, in short every rational advocate of Christianity insists that this last event is established by such force of evidence as to be perfectly incontrovertible, nor have I any hesitation to express my concurrence in the opinion; and indeed why should it appear incredible even on natural principles; instances have frequently occurred of men suffering much more, and for a much greater length of time, and yet survive.

Stedman, in his excellent narrative of an expedition to Surinam in 1773, says, "The Dutch have always been infamously notorious for their cruelty to their slaves. The negroes who had taken refuge in the woods of Surinam from their inhuman masters, began to increase in numbers and boldness, and were enabled to commit several outrages

³⁰ Chap. viii. Part 2.

as well from a spirit of revenge as with a view to obtain subsistence and arms. In 1730, a most shocking and barbarous execution of eleven of the unhappy negro captives was resolved upon, in the expectation that it would terrify their companions and induce them to submit; one man was hanged alive on a gibbet by an iron hook stuck through his ribs, two others were chained to stakes and burnt to death by a slow fire; six women were broken alive upon the rack, and two girls were decapitated." And a little further on we have the following dreadful description of the execution of these wretched sufferers, by an eye witness: "Not long ago I saw a man suspended alive from a gallows by the ribs, between which with a knife was first made an incision and then clenched an iron hook with a chain, in this manner he kept alive three days hanging with his head and feet downwards catching with his tongue the drops of water, it being the rainy season, that were floating down his clotted breast; notwithstanding all this he never complained, and even upbraided a negro for crying while he was flogged below the gallows, 'You a man? de cay facy? are you a man? you behave like a boy.' Shortly after he was knocked on the head by the commiserating centry with the butt end of his musket."

There is a small difference in the report of the Evangelists with respect to the time that Jesus hung upon the cross, but they generally agree, or it may be inferred from the report of three out of the four that he remained from the sixth to the ninth hour; indeed, John says expressly, "it was about the sixth hour," while Mark alone says, "it was the third hour when they crucified;" but there is reason to believe that he was only three hours upon the cross, for when Joseph of Arimathea came to Pilate and craved the body of Jesus, Pilate expressed his surprise that he was so soon dead, the words of Mark in our translation are, "Pilate marvelled if he were already dead,"³¹ which Dr. McKnight thinks should be, "Pilate marvelled that he was already dead;" and Dr. Campbell, "Pilate was amazed that he was so soon dead;" but in whatever way it be rendered it clearly implies that Pilate thought he had not hung long enough to ensure the extinction of life, and in pursuance of this suspicion it is said, "he called unto him the centurion and asked him, whether he had been any while dead, and when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph"³².

³¹ Mark xv. ver. 44.

³² Mark xv. ver. 45.

Indeed, it appears that Pilate was not disposed to exercise the same watchful jealousy here as in the case of an ordinary criminal, for it is in the recollection of the reader how much he exerted himself to save Jesus, and when the clamour was loud on the part of his countrymen the Jews for his execution, he said, "Why what evil hath he done? I find no fault in this man." And relying on this favourable disposition, the officer took the liberty of dispensing with the usual precaution of breaking the criminals legs; "Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with him, but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs³³." Now this practice of breaking the legs could not be the effect of gratuitous or unnecessary cruelty, but must have arisen from what they could not fail to have frequently experienced,—the resuscitation of the deceased; and when Christ bowed the head, and, as it is said, gave up the ghost, we venture to affirm, that in nineteen cases out of twenty this could not be an infallible proof of the total extinction of the vital spark; and, although it is indeed said, that one of the soldiers pierced his side with the spear, the wound, from such a hand, might not be very deep, for it appears that great compassion had been expressed by all the bystanders, as well by the soldiers as by the other spectators, for this innocent sufferer.

Now, although it must be confessed, that crucifixion is a cruel and lingering death, and was certainly invented in barbarous ages to protract the misery of the sufferer; at any rate it will be allowed that the bare nailing the hands and feet to a cross is not the readiest way to destroy life, for admitting that the parts are exquisitely sensible yet being at the extremities, so far removed from the heart, it is not improbable the sufferer might be recovered with care, even after having repeatedly fainted. And, with respect to Jesus, it is well known what attention Joseph of Arimathea showed to him, for on this point the whole four evangelists discover an exact correspondence; he was, say they, a rich man, an honourable councillor—a good man and a just; but John will comprise the whole, "Joseph of Arimathea being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave; he came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus: there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of

³³ John xix. ver. 32.

myrrh and aloes, then took they the body of Jesus and wound it in linen cloths with the spices as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was buried is a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre wherein was never man yet laid, there laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' *preparation day*³⁴." Thus we see the body was committed by Pilate to the exclusive care of Joseph with full power to dispose of it as he should think proper, and this, it will be observed, was on the day of the *preparation*, or day before the Jewish sabbath; and Matthew, himself, who as we have seen is the only one of the four Evangelists who speaks of sealing the stone and setting a watch, admits that it was not till the day *after* the preparation that the chief priests, &c. so much as *thought* of this precaution; "Now the next day that followed the day of preparation the chief priests and pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, 'Sir, we remember that this deceiver, while he was yet alive, said after three days I will rise again,³⁵'" &c. (as already quoted.) Thus, without impeaching the credit of Matthew, it appears that however it might have been in contemplation at one time to place a guard at the sepulchre, yet the precaution as it was thought of too late, became quite superfluous, was in all probability abandoned: and if, during this interval, there be any room to suppose that with the extraordinary care of Joseph, the warm and stimulating nature of the spices, and a constitution naturally vigorous, Jesus might be restored to life, it must have happened instantly; nor can we suppose that his departure would be one moment delayed, therefore the precaution of the chief priests would be perfectly nugatory, for when these came they would, like Mary, have found "the stone rolled away." And here I cannot help expressing my astonishment that no individual has come forward who saw Jesus leave the tomb. Where is Joseph of Arimathea? Where is Nicodemus? for, with the exception of the guards who watched the sepulchre, I know of none whose testimony would have been so satisfactory; Jesus could not have disappeared without Joseph being in some way or other apprised of the fact, if he was restored to life it can scarcely be supposed to have been without Joseph's assistance, and even if it happened as Matthew states, the sepulchre being in his own garden he must have been the first to

³⁴ Mark xv. ver. 42. "because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath."

³⁵ Matthew xxvii. ver. 62.

hear of the consternation of the guards, who, not having yet received their cue from the priests, would probably not have disguised what they saw, therefore as he must have known of the circumstance one way or the other, can we join with the Evangelists in calling him a good, just, and honourable man? Such a man would, like Paul, in spite of all opposition and even at the hazard of his life, have published the great truth to the world. What then could be his motive for having suppressed all knowledge of this extraordinary affair. Had he also received a bribe? No, but he was a *prudent* man, "he was a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews;" but his fears could not hinder him from stating the transaction privately to Peter, John, Matthew, Paul, yet they appear not to have had any communication with him upon the subject; at any rate if they had they do not mention it. Why then is he so much extolled, for instead of praise he appears to deserve the highest reprobation, for his conduct seems no less criminal and fully as unaccountable as that of the guards.

Be all this as it may, I think it will admit of the clearest proof, (if we admit it proved at all, that Jesus was seen alive after his crucifixion,) that he appeared in his *natural body*, and here I again request the particular attention of the reader to the following texts:—"Then the same day at even, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed them his hands and his feet. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord³⁵." "But Thomas, named Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came, the other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe³⁶." "And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst³⁷." "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing³⁸." This, one would think, is pretty satisfactory evidence, not only of Jesus having been seen alive again, but also of his having appeared in his natural body. Yet

³⁶ John xx. ver. 19.

³⁸ John xx. ver. 26.

³⁷ John xx. ver. 24.

³⁹ John xx. ver. 27.

there is nothing mysterious or improbable in all this; yet a certain degree of mystery has been attached to the words, "the door being shut," but, unless men have a very extraordinary predelection for the marvellous, they will not, while doors are made to turn upon hinges, prefer saying that a body composed of muscle and bone should penetrate through the wood, particularly as a very good reason is assigned, "the door being shut for fear of the Jews." Thomas's exclamation too, of "my Lord and my God!" which, fairly interpreted can be understood only as expressive of his great surprise, has been construed to signify that he thought it a spirit, and such indeed was the idea of some of the rest of the apostles when he first appeared, but they were soon undeceived in this point, Jesus himself giving them the most satisfactory evidence to the contrary; for as the two disciples who fell in with him going to Emaus, on their return to Jerusalem were relating to the Eleven, how he was known to them in breaking of bread, and under the impression of surprise mingled with terror, described his leaving them as "vanishing out of their sight⁴⁰." It is said Jesus again appeared and said, "Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet *believed not for joy, and wondered*, he said unto them, *Have ye here any meat?* And they gave him a piece of *broiled fish, and a honey-comb*. And he took it, *and did eat before them*." And here I cannot help remarking that the words, "while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered," are extremely beautiful, and gives the whole narrative the appearance of truth and probability. John informs us that after he had asked them for meat, "Children have ye any meat?" and while the fish were preparing, he called to them, with the impatience natural to a hungry person, "Come and dine," or in common language, come to dinner. The obsolete stile of our version, the terror and surprise of the *dramatis personæ*, the varied expression and order of the different historians narrating the same appearance, are no doubt calculated to throw a degree of mystery and even confusion upon a narrative otherwise abundantly simple and natural.

⁴⁰ Luke xxiv. ver. 31, to 43.

And I must again observe, that while these historians appear to differ very materially upon matters of no light importance, on this point they accord in a most surprising manner, which is the more remarkable as there is no appearance of concert or mutual understanding, except in the case of Mark, who is supposed (as has been already noticed) to have made an abridgement of Matthew's gospel.

Then we have it proved, I think on pretty satisfactory evidence, that Jesus was seen alive after his crucifixion, that he appeared in his natural body, possessing all the organs of sense, the feelings and appetites natural to the human frame, he eats, drinks, walks, and converses with those friends with whom he had been upon the most intimate footing, and finally assures them that it was himself personally and not a spirit, "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." This I say is proved because it must be granted by the most determined sceptic, that a natural and probable event does not require the same degree of proof as that which we call supernatural.

But now the difficulty of my subject appears; a question occurs, What became of him afterwards? Matthew leaves us in the most perplexing doubt. What? doubt! Yes, Matthew concludes not by saying, that they saw him ascend into heaven, "but that some doubted;" yes, some of the Eleven that accompanied him into Galilee. But of what did they doubt? They could not doubt of having seen their Master whom they knew so well⁴¹; they could not doubt of his being the same identical person, from the proof which he had so recently condescended to give them; "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, handle me and see."

What then was the subject of their doubt? Perhaps they doubted what they afterwards heard so positively asserted by the followers of Paul in their name, that they, the eleven apostles, had seen him ascend into heaven, while they themselves, as has been already shown, honestly decline to say so. Yet they positively affirm that they saw him repeatedly in the body; but doubt whether he went to heaven in that body. Is that the subject matter of their doubt? Paul himself says, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven." "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body⁴²." But Jesus appeared in his natural body.

⁴¹ The doubt could not arise from distance of situation on the mountain as commentators artfully insinuate, for the words are; "and when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted." Mat. xxviii. ver. 17.

⁴² Corinthians xv.

“A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have⁴³.” What, then, shall we suppose that he remained in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem until his wounds were healed; sometimes appearing in one dress, sometimes in another, to avoid the notice of his enemies? Indeed we are told, “after this he appeared in another *form* to two of them, as they walked and went into the country⁴⁴.” Perhaps the Greek word, *Morphæ*, which is here rendered *form*, might with more propriety, be translated *dress* or *fashion*; for it would be absurd to suppose that Jesus appeared in any other form than that of a man. However it is certain that on several occasions he was not immediately recognized by his own disciples. Going to Emaus, he was not known by Cleophas and the other disciple, but in the act of “breaking of bread⁴⁵.” At the sea of Tiberias also, Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, and others of his most intimate acquaintance, did not know him⁴⁶; and Mary, who saw him first in the garden near the sepulchre, knew him not, “supposing him to have been the gardener⁴⁷.” “And when she had thus spoken, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus⁴⁸.” But as soon as the well-known voice reached her ear, when “Jesus saith unto her, Mary! she turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni! which is to say, Master!” and, in an ecstasy of joy, fell at his feet, and attempted to embrace them, but Jesus said, “Touch me not! for I am not yet ascended to my father.” Words, which if we consider the surprise and agitation of Mary, may well bear a latitude of interpretation, but which, if naturally construed, cannot admit of any mysterious meaning; for we have seen them, in defiance of this order, holding him by the feet, and have even heard Jesus himself, upon a subsequent occasion, command them to “*touch him*.”

Why then may not the meaning be? “touch not my feet, the wounds are yet raw from those cruel nails! I am going to my father. Go, tell my brethren.” The expression is remarkable; he says, not my disciples, as they are afterwards called by the historian, “go, tell my brethren,” probably his natural brethren,—Judas, Simon, James, &c. the sons of Joseph, and shall we say of Mary⁴⁹, that they “go

⁴³ Luke xxiv. ver. 39.

⁴⁴ Mark xvi. ver. 12.

⁴⁵ Luke xxiv. ver. 16.

⁴⁶ John xxi. vers. 3 and 4.

⁴⁷ Now there is no meta-morphæ, metamorphoses, here, no change of form; he always appears as a man,—but a man in a different dress.

⁴⁸ John xx. ver. 14.

⁴⁹ Yes, her name was *Mary* at any rate; but whether this Mary be a

into Galilee, and there shall they see me." We have seen that he had just come from Galilee, accompanied by his mother, and several other women, and relatives, and there his father and mother now resided. "He turned aside into the parts of Galilee, and dwelt in Nazareth⁵⁰." Whether he was immediately to proceed, and there, with his father and mother, and those affectionate brothers, having escaped the malice of his sanguinary persecutors, he probably awaited in patient tranquillity the happy change which was to fit him for those celestial regions, "where flesh and blood cannot enter."

"Hail! holy light! thee I revisit safe!
Escap'd the Stygian pool, tho' long detain'd
In that obscure sojourn; — — —
Taught by the Heavenly muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to reascend,
Though hard and rare—thee I revisit safe,
And feel thy sov'reign vital lamp."

Thus, after millions of volumes have been written, and men of the greatest genius and talents have, for almost two thousand years, like a ship without rudder or compass, been tossed in an ocean of doubt and uncertainty, the light of truth at last breaks in upon us, and we rejoice to find that reason and scripture are reconciled.

Since the foregoing remarks were written, Paley's Evidences have been put into my hand, and a passage pointed out, where the subject of the ascension is adverted to, not indeed as a matter of first rate importance, but merely in an

different person from her we called the *Virgin Mary*, is thrown, one, would think, into designed obscurity. M'Knight, in his preface to James' says,—“Lardner observes that Jerome seems to have been the first who said that our Lord's brethren were the sons of his mother's sister, (Mary also,) and that this opinion was at length embraced by Augustine, and has prevailed very much of late; being the opinion of the Romans in general, of Lightfoot, Wilsius, Lamp, and many Protestants.” On the other hand, says M'Knight, Origen, Epiphanius, and other ancient writers, both Greek and Latin, were of opinion that James the Lord's brother was not the son of the Virgin's sister, but of Joseph our Lord's reputed father, by a former wife, who died before he espoused the Virgin.”

The intelligent reader however will observe there is no authority for these conjectures, and all we can distinctly know from scripture, is, that their mother's name was Mary. Yet we read of “the carpenter's son whose mother and brothers we know;” and Matthew xii. ver. 47. “behold thy mother and brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee;” and also, Acts i. ver. 14. “Mary the mother of Jesus and his brethren.” Mark vi. ver. 3. “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?”

⁵⁰ Matthew ii. ver. 22.

incidental manner; I observe, however, that I have omitted, but entirely without design, some words which may appear essential to the argument. In John's account of what Jesus said to Mary, "touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to to my Father," at the latter clause of the verse it is added, "But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God."

This omission was occasioned by the last clause of the verse being separated from the first, by the words "go tell my brethren, &c," When my eye caught these words, which seemed to correspond so well with the other Evangelists, "go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee," I read no further, concluding it to be the same passage. Now the words, "I ascend to my Father and *your Father, to my God and your God,*" which, it will be observed are only to be found here, and which so little accord with the plain literal meaning of the other Evangelists; if we are not allowed to suppose that they have been added by some transcriber who wished to improve upon the original text; cannot, alone be considered evidence of the ascension, nor, by any means, sufficient to compensate for the total silence of John, upon the important subject to which they seem to refer.

We have already seen, that Mary was in the greatest trepidation and alarm, the *time*, the *place*, the appearance "early while it was yet dark," at the mouth of that very sepulchre where she so lately saw him laid, lifeless, who now appears to her terrified senses; "And they went out quickly from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed, neither said they any thing to any man for they were afraid ⁵¹:" under such circumstances, I humbly conceive no great stress can be laid on Mary's report, even, although it were confirmed by the other Evangelists, much less when it is in effect contradicted.

But to show how little importance Dr. Paley affects to attach to the silence of Matthew and John on the subject of the ascension, although the only individuals (who have come forward) who were present on the occasion where it is supposed to have taken place; I shall transcribe the passage. Adverting to the preface of Luke's Gospel in illustration of his argument, which went to shew, that "the Gospels were not the original cause of the Christian history being believed but were themselves among the consequences of that belief⁵²," he adds in St. John's Gospel the same point appears, hence that there are some principal facts to which the historian re-

⁵¹ Mark xvi. ver. 8.

⁵² Paley, Vol. II. page 74.

fers, but which he does not relate; a remarkable instance of this kind is the ascension which is not mentioned by John in its place, at the conclusion of the history, but which is plainly referred to in the following words of the sixth chapter "what, and if ye shall see the son of man ascend up where he was before?" And still more positively according to our Evangelist in the words which Christ spoke to Mary after his resurrection, "Touch me not, &c." This can only be accounted for," says the Doctor, "by the supposition that St. John wrote under a sense of the *notoriety* of Christ's ascension, amongst those by whom his book was likely to be read. The same account must also be given of St. Matthew's omission of the same important fact, *the thing* was very well known, and it did not occur to the historian, that it was necessary to add any particular concerning it; It agrees also," says he "with this *solution* and *no other*, that *neither Matthew nor John disposes of the person of our Lord in any manner, whatever*". In this easy way does Doctor Paley dismiss the important question of the ascension; but the "*notoriety*" of "*the thing*," although it might be admitted as an excuse for Mark and Luke omitting some particulars, as they only report what they heard, not what they saw; yet a full and explicit declaration on the part of Matthew and John, being original eye and hear witnesses, seems absolutely indispensable; their testimony is the sole ground of our belief *now*, and it could not but "occur" to them, that those, even *then*, who had not seen Christ ascend into heaven, expected a distinct account from them who had seen it; detailing, in the same minute and particular manner, all its circumstances, as in the case of his execution, or of his having appeared again in life, for instead of "*the thing* being well known amongst those by whom their book was likely to be read," it was absolutely denied by the whole people of Judea, excepting those alone who believed on their report, while the rest of the world were entirely uninformed upon the subject; and if those who were to read the books of Matthew and John did not need to be informed respecting Christ's ascension, neither did they require to be informed of his crucifixion which was indeed *sufficiently* "*notorious*"⁵³," Yet upon that topic John is very minute, for

⁵³ Some writers, indeed, are of opinion that the whole narrative is a fiction, but those who read Paley's "*Horæ Pauline*," and other works on the same side, will be convinced, that the leading facts, apart from the supernatural, are very probable. Josephus himself says, that several impostors, pretending to be prophets, were taken up and executed at that period for deceiving the people. (See *Antiquities*.)

after stating what none of the rest have done, that the soldier with a spear pierced Jesus' side, he adds, "he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." Now if the Doctor had told us that we do not require to be assured of such particulars as these, because, if the ascension be proved, there is nothing in this that any man need hesitate about, he would have told the truth, but to say that "it agrees with this solution and no other," (namely, "the notoriety of the thing,") "that neither Matthew nor John disposes of the person of our Lord in any manner whatever," is entirely begging the question; in fact, this very learned and laborious work is loaded with superfluous proof on minor points, while, on this important subject, he is entirely silent, taking no further notice of it throughout the whole of his work, and so little calculated is this article to arrest the attention of the reader, that with me it left no impression, although I had carefully perused the book before.

But still further to shew the importance of Matthew and John as witnesses compared with Luke and Mark: I shall in addition to what I have quoted from Michaelles, transcribe another short passage from Paley on another occasion. "The authors of two of the histories," says he, "namely, Matthew and John, were present at many of the scenes which they describe, eye witnesses of the facts, ear witnesses of the discourses, writing from personal knowledge and recollection, and what strengthens their testimony, writing upon a subject in which their minds were deeply engaged and in which, as they must have been, very frequently repeating the accounts to others, the passages of the history would be kept continually alive in their memory⁵⁴;" now how does this agree with the Doctor's "solution" in the former passage? But to proceed, he says a little further on, "The Gospels which bear the names of Mark and Luke, although not the narrative of eye witnesses are, if genuine, removed from that only by *one degree*:" which means, simply, that they are no witnesses at all.

Now would any judge overlook the silence of the principal eye and ear witnesses, and receive, as proof, the testimony of those who had learnt the facts in question, from report only; for although the silence of Mark and Luke might not, materially, effect the proof: yet, (as has already been observed) the explicit, and unequivocal testimony of Matthew and John upon the main point, appears to be *absolutely indispensable*

⁵⁴ Paley Chap. viii. p. 1.

as they are the only witnesses who have come forward pretending to a personal knowledge of the whole transaction from beginning to end, for John says, speaking of himself; "this is the disciple which testifieth these things and wrote these things and we know that his testimony is true⁵⁵."

Now while we accompany John in his long and circumstantial detail, and every verse look with breathless impatience for an account of the most wonderful, the most stupendous event that ever happened in the world; an event which could not fail to leave an impression on the minds of the spectators never to be effaced; which must have been the constant subject of their meditations, the endless theme of their discourse, exalting every faculty of the soul, and dictating even to the humblest capacity, language corresponding to the grandeur of the occasion; how great is our astonishment when we come to the last verse, which I shall transcribe, but dare not designate!

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." Amen! how is the heart of every sincere and anxious enquirer, torn with disappointment and chagrin, at such an Amen!

Now, to sum up the whole. We have seen the account which each of the Evangelists has given respecting the resurrection, and ascension of Jesus; and it appears that no person was present when he left the sepulchre, nor does any individual come forward who declares expressly, and for himself, that he *saw* him ascend into heaven.

This last fact then seems to rest solely on the evidence of Paul, and his pupils, Mark and Luke; they indeed do not pretend to have seen it themselves, but allege that he ascended into heaven in the presence of the Eleven, who they tell us are ready to attest the fact. Accordingly two of the most intelligent of these men; namely, Matthew and John, have been examined, and, although they distinctly declare that they saw Jesus alive, several times, after his crucifixion, yet they are very far from pretending to say, that they saw him ascend into heaven; while the other nine apostles, with Joseph of Arimathea and several other persons who were actively engaged in this affair, have declined to come forward, and are altogether silent upon the subject.

But that Jesus was seen alive after his crucifixion is

⁵⁵ John xxi. ver. 24.

proved, and that no doubt can remain of his having been dead, is also proved, we are told from the following considerations: for after having hung for some hours upon the cross, "he cried with a loud voice⁵⁶, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and immediately after "he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." And Pilate having sent an officer to ascertain the fact, "ordered the body to be given to Joseph who, having embalmed and wrapped it in fine linen, laid it in his own tomb," where it remained three days. Now with regard to the first, that Jesus was seen alive after his crucifixion, as it is a natural and probable event, we have seen no reason to dispute; but with respect to his having been certainly dead, I beg leave to add a very few words.

We have already seen that Pilate was favourably disposed towards Jesus. As Roman governor he did not enter into the theological disputes of the Jews, nor was he actuated by any of their prejudices; on the contrary he was willing to save him if he could, and it is worthy of notice, that though he was extremely doubtful whether he could be "already dead," he dispensed in favour of Jesus with the invariable practice of breaking the criminals legs, (which, however was rigourously executed on the malefactors that suffered with him,) and readily consented to the removal of the body.

Doctor Fleetwood, in his *Life of Christ*, has observed "that Pilate was at first surprised at the request of Joseph, thinking it highly improbable that he should be dead in so short a time; he had indeed given orders to the soldiers to break the legs of the crucified persons, but he knew it was common to them to live many hours after that operation was performed; for though the pain they felt must be exquisite to the highest degree, yet as the vital parts remained untouched, life would continue some time in the miserable body."

When I wrote the foregoing remarks on the power of the human body to sustain protracted suffering, I had not seen Doctor Fleetwood's observations, and I am happy to find my own sentiments confirmed by so respectable an authority; for, under the aggravated and increased torture of having their legs broke, he affirms, that "it was common

⁵⁶ It may be a question, whether his crying with a loud voice be a proof of his spirits being totally exhausted, while it is obvious the exertion would strongly tend to that effect, and might occasion syncope or fainting.

for them to remain alive many hours." But though Jesus escaped this last act of barbarity, we are told that a soldier pierced his side with a spear; with respect to this I have already observed that the wound might not be very deep, as the Roman soldiers like the governor, had no prejudice against him; for one of them calls him a just person, and another said he was the son of a ⁵⁷ God; but we are told that from the wound, "forthwith came there out blood and water." On the supposition that this is correct, I shall leave to physiologists to determine whether such an appearance be significant of life or death, and shall only observe, that this circumstance is mentioned by none of the Evangelists but John, who, it is universally allowed, wrote many years after the other three, and for the express purpose of answering objections.

But he was three days and three nights in the grave. "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth ⁵⁸." If this was indeed the case, the most sceptical must be convinced, for it is impossible to suppose, after his body had lain so long in the grave that he could have been restored to life without a miracle; but the truth is, he could not have been more than one day and two nights, at the very utmost.

He was buried on Friday night. No! he was not buried, according to our idea of the term, for we have seen that after Joseph had embalmed the body and had carefully wrapped it in fine linen, he laid it in his own tomb, an open sepulchre dug out of a rock, and secured at the entrance only by a large stone. We have seen Peter and Mary enter it, and have reason to believe it was perfectly dry and comfortable, as they found the linen that was about the body folded up and laid by in two parcels, probably clean and white, one at the head and the other at the feet where Mary a few minutes before saw the two angels, or young man in shining garments.

But not to lose sight of our argument: his body was laid in the sepulchre on Friday night, and on Sunday morning before daylight it was gone, or according to the Jewish reckoning, he was crucified on the preparation day that is the day before the sabbath, and on the morning of the first day of the week, or day after the Jewish sabbath, which Christians keep as Sunday, or the Lord's day in honour of

⁵⁷ See Dr. Campbell.

⁵⁸ Matthew xii. ver. 40.

the resurrection, Mary found the sepulchre empty. Thus by their own shewing, he was only one day and two nights in the tomb.

But nobody saw him leave it, therefore the exact time is not ascertained; and for any thing that appears to the contrary, he might have left it *the very next hour*, or at any intermediate hour betwixt Friday night and Sunday morning; for, as the guard was not thought of till the day after the preparation, if they came at all they would come too late, and whether the body was stolen away by his disciples as they affirmed, or whether Jesus was restored to life by the exertions of Joseph and Nicodemus, it is evident he would be removed without loss of time; and as the story ascribed to the soldiers of the guard, for we can trace it to no other source⁵⁹, of an angel coming down and rolling away the stone, is inadmissible on account of their perjury, the hour when he left the sepulchre is *perfectly undetermined*, therefore I conceive no inference, with respect to the certainty of Christ's death, can be made from the time that he remained in the sepulchre.

But the conduct of Joseph and Nicodemus is the most unaccountable; for, of all the persons engaged in this mysterious transaction, none had so much the means of ascertaining whether Jesus was really dead, or whether he rose from the grave in a natural or supernatural manner. If they knew that he rose from the grave in a miraculous manner, should we not expect to find them foremost in the ranks of the apostles in promulgating the amazing intelligence to the world; but on the contrary, what would have been their conduct, if they were conscious that Jesus was restored to life by their exertions? Silence! silence was their best policy, and what before seemed highly reprehensible becomes, in this view of the matter, not only prudent but praiseworthy; for if Joseph afforded him an asylum in his own house till his wounds were healed, and at last furnished him with the means of effecting his escape, the most profound secrecy was absolutely requisite, not only for his own security, but also for that of Jesus himself, against

⁵⁹ We must be very careful not to ascribe more contradiction to the Evangelists than really exists. By our translation Matthew is in express opposition to the other three, who say that when the Marys arrived they found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty; crying, "they have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid him," &c. But Matthew is made to say, when the Marys came, "behold there was a great earthquake," &c. But it should be, "there had been a great earthquake," &c.—See Dr. Campbell, &c. at the place.

whom the priests and rulers appear to have been highly exasperated.

But these arguments, (I may be told) formidable as they appear, have no foundation in fact. That Jesus was restored to life is a mere hypothesis unworthy of the least regard, because it is not supported by positive proof. Be it so; but circumstances strongly incline us to believe the fact, and circumstantial evidence is, in some cases, preferable to positive proof. Murder, for instance, is a crime which in its very nature evades the light, and frequently baffles all attempts to bring it home to the accused. In such cases the judge invariably informs the jury that circumstantial evidence tending to the same point in one unbroken chain constitutes a proof more satisfactory than positive personal testimony, because *men may swear falsely, but circumstances cannot lie*. Now what appears to possess great weight in this case, is, that *those who believe* there is sufficient evidence that Jesus appeared alive after his crucifixion must *also believe* that he appeared in his natural body; for if the four Evangelists be admitted to prove the one, we cannot refuse their testimony with regard to the other; for while they candidly declare that they thought they had seen a spirit, they at the same time confess that Jesus himself said to them, "why do thoughts arise in your mind? handle me and see; a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have, be not afraid, it is I myself." Now this is very unlike the vision that Paul saw; "*vox et preter ea nihil*." Here is no shadowy being that evades the touch, the apostles saw the man; "it is I myself"⁶⁰.

We have also glanced at the raising of Lazarus; and we

⁶⁰ In corroboration of the above, I beg leave to add that Irenæus the most diligent collector of apostolic traditions who lived in the succeeding age, and had conversed with Polycarp and Papias, who had received the account from John and others of the apostles, affirms, "that Jesus lived to the age of fifty years and upwards," or "that he lived to be an old man." Referring also to the gospel of John in confirmation of the fact: "a quinquagesimo anno declinat jam in ætatem senioram, quam habens dominos noster docebat, secut Evangelium et omnes seniores testantur que in Asia apud Joannem discipulum domini convenerant id ipsum tradidisse eis Joannem. Permanit autem cum eis usque ad Trojani tempora. Quidam autem eorum non solum Joannem sed et alias apostolos viderunt et hæc eadem deipsis audierunt et testantur de hujus modi relatione. Iren, lib. ii. c. 39.

Dr. Whity expresses his surprise "that Irenæus should assert a fact on the authority of John and the gospel which is false and contradictory to that gospel," but the fact is not in contradiction to John's gospel. At the same time there is reason to believe that our present copies have been a little improved since the time of Irenæus.

may remark, that this last effort of Jesus to convince his countrymen of his divine mission, was productive of consequences the very reverse of what he seems to have expected, for they became still more enraged against him. "Jesus therefore walked no more openly amongst them, but retired into the wilderness⁶¹." The magistrates and clergy advertising a reward for his apprehension: "Now both the chief priests and pharisees had given a commandment that if any man knew where he was, he should shew it that they might take him⁶²." Lazarus also shared the same fate, and was exposed to the most deadly suspicion; "they consulted how they might put Lazarus to death also⁶³."

This affair then we have seen took place at Bethany; to that village, which was about two miles from Jerusalem, Jesus frequently resorted; sometimes to visit Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary, whom he is said to have "loved," and sometimes to visit Simon the leper and his son⁶⁴ Judas Iscariot, in whom also he appears to have reposed the utmost confidence; for, on venturing to leave his retreat in the wilderness, he immediately repairs to their house.

Previous to the raising of Lazarus, Judas appears to have been sincerely devoted to his master; at least Jesus had never suspected his fidelity, for he tells the twelve apostles, including Judas Iscariot, "they should sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." And although Judas after his treason was known, is said "to have been a thief and carried the bag;" yet it is evident he was not chosen an apostle for being a thief; and even this bag to which something very suspicious seems to attach, means no more than the common purse of the party, and that he was their purser is also evident from what passed on another occasion. Jesus said to him, "that thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spoke thus unto him; for some of them thought, because he had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast, or that he should give something to the poor⁶⁵."

But whether he had ever been cordially attached to Jesus, or whether he had imposed upon him by an artful de-

⁶¹ John xi. ver. 54.

⁶² John ix. ver. 57.

⁶³ John xii. ver. 10.

⁶⁴ Matthew xxvi. 6. and John xii. ver. 4. "Then said Judas Iscariot, Simon's son one of his disciples," &c.

⁶⁵ John xiii. ver. 27 to 29.

meanour, it is certain that after the raising of Lazarus, Judas no longer attempts to disguise his sentiments; and, like a person who has just made some discovery unfavourable to the character of his friend, he not only appears cold and distant, but even seems to think himself emancipated from all restraint; for when Mary poured the ointment on Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair, although in his father's house and at his father's table and Lazarus looking him in the face⁶⁶, he openly expressed his jealousy and disgust, saying, with indignation, "to what purpose this waste? why was not this ointment sold and given to the poor?" and immediately, without regard to the rights of hospitality and unmindful of those sentiments of respect which he owed to his master, he sets off and informs the magistrates, and received the promised reward.

But, Judas though he be, is it possible to conceive that living in the same village, intimate with the parties concerned, nay, in all probability was present at the scene, if he had been convinced that Lazarus was restored to life by supernatural means; that a miracle so stupendous, instead of impressing him with new admiration and reverence, should only have excited his cupidity and contempt; on natural principles this is impossible, but we are told that "satan entered into him," nor should we hesitate to believe with Matthew, that "he went and hanged himself" if Luke had not told us that he bought a field with the wages of iniquity, and falling headlong his bowels gushed out⁶⁷. However, the Bishop of Llandaff has shewn that Luke was neither one of the Seventy nor an eye witness; and writing from report only, his authority is of little weight, when placed in opposition to that of Matthew.

It may now be worth while to enquire, as Mary the sister of Lazarus or Mary Magdalene acted so distinguished a part in this drama, whether they be the same person, or whether the woman whom Luke calls a sinner, be the one or the other.

The Rev. Doctor Whitby, who writes the large commentary on the New Testament, proves the impossibility of the thing, by the following unanswerable argument. "It would not, (says he) be for the honour of the Divine Saviour to be so intimate with a bad woman⁶⁸," Doctor Fleetwood affirms

⁶⁶ John xii. ver. 2. "And Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him."

⁶⁷ Acts i. ver. 18.

⁶⁸ See Whitby's Comment on John xii.—Mary.

they are different persons, and the Bishop of Landaff defies Paine to prove, that even Mary Magdalene herself is the sinner spoken of; but if these Reverend persons had not pointed out the serious consequences of confounding this trio, the careless reader would have been apt to suppose them one and the same person. The difficulty, if it be possible for a person who has no other object in view than the discovery of truth, to conceive any, seems to arise from the different manner in which the several Evangelists relate the same event, and we shall perceive that the whole may be referred to what took place at Simon's house, when Mary anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. "Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead, there they made him a supper and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him; then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, *very costly*, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with odour of the ointment⁶⁹." Now surely it will not be disputed that we have here, Mary the sister of Lazarus. But let us hear Matthew, "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of *very precious ointment*, and poured it on his head as he sat at meat, and his disciples, when they saw it, had indignation, &c⁷⁰." With this account Mark agrees in every respect, the time, the place, the act, correspond exactly, and both agree with John. Thus, it appears by three out of the four Evangelists, that this woman was no other than Mary the sister of Lazarus: but Luke, although he evidently alludes to the same occasion, yet, not being present himself, and being obliged, in writing his narrative, to collect and digest in the best manner he was able, the various anecdotes in circulation among the brethren⁷¹, has neither observed the same order, with respect to time, nor does he appear to have been accurately informed, either with regard to the name of the village, or of the names of the persons concerned, for he confounds the story of Lazarus with that of the widow's son, the village of Bethany, with that of Nain, and Mary the sister of Lazarus, with "the woman who was a sinner." "And it came to pass, the day after that he went into a city called Nain, &c. Now when he came nigh to the City,

⁶⁹ John xii. ver. 3. ⁷⁰ Matthew xxvi. ver. 6.

⁷¹ Indeed it is evident as all commentators agree that Luke had not seen the Gospel of Matthew.

behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And he came and touched the bier, and they that bare him stood still, and he said, I say unto thee, young man arise, and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak, &c.⁷² Now that Luke in this narrative, can only be understood to refer to the raising of Lazarus is evident, both because he no where else takes the least notice of that event, and because none of the other three Evangelists have spoken of the widow's son, and by connecting the story with what he states to have happened on the same occasion, that point is established beyond all possibility of doubt, for at the 37th verse of the same chapter, he thus proceeds: "And behold a woman in the City, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at his feet, behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment: and when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, this man if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner." Now I think we could not hesitate a moment to pronounce this to be the same event to which the other Evangelists refer, only that it is said to have happened at a Pharisee's house; but if this Pharisee should turn out to be no other than our old friend Simon, we shall be apt to conclude that the woman who was a sinner, and who is also said "to have loved much, and to whom much is forgiven⁷³," is no other than Mary the sister of Lazarus. Verse 40, "And Jesus answered and said unto him, (the Pharisee) Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee, &c." Thus every circumstance concurs in proving that this Pharisee was no other than Simon the leper, the father of Judas Iscariot, and that the woman whom Luke calls a sinner, is Mary the sister of Lazarus, and if we consider what he immediately adds respecting Mary Magdalene, it will be impossible to deny that she is the sinner referred to.

"And a certain woman who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of which went seven devils, and Johanna, the wife, of Herod's Steward, and Susannah, and many others which ministered to him of their substance, followed him⁷⁴." Thus if Jesus "loved

⁷² Luke vii. verses 11, 12, 14, and 15. ⁷³ Luke vii. ver. 47.

⁷⁴ Luke viii. ver. 2.

Mary" the sister of Lazarus, or if the woman who was a sinner "loved much" also; we find that Mary Magdalene's attachment to Jesus was unbounded, here she is said to have ministered to him of her substance; she attends as a sorrowful spectator at his crucifixion, when Joseph carried his body to the sepulchre, she sat opposite, "and observed where it was laid," and early in the morning, before day-light, for her excessive grief and anxiety, seem to have banished all repose; she is again in the garden: from all which, it is in vain to deny that Mary Magdalene, Mary the sister of Lazarus, and the woman who was a sinner, are any more than different names or appellations for the same person, at least, if the story were found in four contemporary authors of any other character than that of inspired writers, the conclusion would be infallible.

Is it not then to be lamented that the reverend persons alluded to, should, with a zeal beyond knowledge, deny what must be obvious to every candid reader, and that one of them, in particular, should be hurried into a conclusion so rash and inconsiderate, as to affirm, "that Mary could not be the woman who was called a sinner, because it would not be for the honour of the Divine Saviour to be so much in company with a bad woman?"

PART II.



THUS far we have proceeded upon the supposition that these books are perfectly genuine and authentic, that they were written at the time they pretend, and by the persons whose names they bear.

That the first and fourth, Matthew and John, were written by apostles of Jesus, and eye witnesses of the facts they record; and that the other two, Mark and Luke, were probably contemporaries of these apostles; but more certainly companions and pupils of Paul. Indeed Dr. Chalmers claims the same respect for these books, and insists that they are, even considered as human compositions, of equal authority with Tacitus and Josephus, or any other ancient author of the same age.

"The veracity of those authors," says he, "and the genuineness of their respective publications, (meaning the Gospel history,) are established on grounds much stronger than have been alleged in behalf of Tacitus, or any ancient author¹." And again he asks "how it came to pass, that the Evangelists, with as much internal evidence, and a vast deal more external evidence, in their favour, should be made to stand before Josephus like so many prisoners at the bar of justice²." But considered as mere human compositions this appears to be rather problematical, for what is it that constitutes the authenticity of an historian? Surely it is requisite that he have been universally read and acknowledged, by public writers and historians, of his own age and country.

"The authenticity of any ancient writing," says M'Knight, in his valuable translation of Paul's Epistles, "is established, first, by the testimony of cotemporary and succeeding authors, whose works have come down to us, and who speak of that writing, as known to be the work of the person whose name it bears: secondly, to the suitableness of the things contained in such a writing, to the character and circumstances of its supposed authors, and by the similarity of its stile, to the stile of the other acknowledged writings of that author, the former of these proofs is called the external evi-

¹ Evidences, chap. i. page 36. ² Chap. iii. page 87.

dence, the latter the internal; where these two kinds of evidence are found accompanying any writing they render its genuineness indubitable³."

Now, although such advocates as Doctor Paley and Chalmers may tell us how generally these books were read and their authors acknowledged by men of the same period, and they, like other rhetoricians, delight to embellish their compositions with plausible and partial statements, let us hear what sober history relates. The judicious Moshien, whose invincible regard to truth is universally acknowledged, in his Ecclesiastical History, says; "The opinion, or rather the conjectures of the learned concerning the time when the books of the New Testament were collected into one volume, as also about the authors of that collection, are extremely different; this important question is attended with insuperable difficulties to us in the latter times; it is, however sufficient for us to know that *after the middle of the second century* the greatest part of the books of the New Testament were read in every Christian society⁴." Candour, however, requires that we should here observe that Doctor Moshien's remarks seem to refer to the authors of the collection, not to the authors of the books. However, after informing us what care was requisite on the part of the church to prevent our being inundated with spurious gospels, he thus proceeds: "Not long after Christ's ascension into heaven, several histories of his life and doctrines full of pious frauds and fabulous wonders were composed by persons whose intentions perhaps were not bad, but whose writings discover the greatest superstition and ignorance; nor was this all, productions appeared which were imposed upon the world by fraudulent men, as the writings of the holy apostles: these apocryphal and spurious writings must have produced a sad confusion and rendered both the history and doctrine of Christ uncertain, had not the rulers of the church used all possible care and diligence in separating the books that were truly apostolical and divine, from that spurious trash, and convey them down to posterity in one volume."

Now, amidst the acknowledged darkness and difficulty of distinguishing the real from the spurious gospels, what authority have we for believing that the books which we receive as canonical are certainly such?

I might, like the writers lately referred to, give long ex-

³ M'Knight, Vol. iv. p. 210.

⁴ Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. pages 108 and 109.

tracts from the works of Irenæus, Clemens of Alexandria, and other writers of the second and third century, shewing what books were esteemed authentic in their time; I might even make a parade of great reading and intimacy with the fathers, simply by transcribing what Eusebius or Lardner have collected from their writings, but this could answer no earthly purpose, unless to divert the attention of the reader from the real object of his pursuit.

If we go further back and refer to those who are called apostolic fathers,—Barnabas, Clemens of Rome, Polycarp, &c. in the scanty scraps ascribed to them which have any claim to genuineness, we may indeed find quotations from the writings of Paul⁵, which they could not fail to have seen, (because, as we shall see by and by, he was the great prompter of the party, the source of all that was attractive and sublime among Christians from the first to the nineteenth century,) but we shall look in vain for any mention of the four Evangelists or any literal extracts from their writings; we have, however, some passages which convey the same sentiments, but Doctor Paley has observed that the words of Christ which they have put down, they themselves might have heard from the apostles, or might have received through the ordinary medium of oral tradition; which is the more probable because Clemens, to whom he seems to refer, never quotes any of the four Evangelists, as he does Paul, on similar occasions.

I might proceed to fill many pages with extracts from Lardner, or in a more compressed form, might copy from Paley what books were esteemed genuine in the time of Origin, anno domini 230; by Athenasius a century after, and still later by Jerome, &c. &c. but this would prove nothing, for what was not true in the first century cannot be true in the third and fourth. These writers were not contemporaries with the Evangelists, and have in fact little more ground to proceed upon than we ourselves have, except what it is now become so fashionable to despise; namely, the tradition of the church, for with respect to a correct and critical knowledge of scripture, it is allowed by all, that these fathers are far excelled by theologians of the present day.

But why have recourse to men who lived three or four hundred years after Christ, or even to doubtful and anony-

⁵ I. Clement xix. and 20. Take the epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle into your hands, "What was it that he wrote to you at his first preaching the gospel amongst you?"—Corinthians.

mous fragments of the first century, while we have such easy access to writers universally allowed to be authentic, who lived at the very time? In Judea, we have Paul whose great genius, uncommon character, his eloquent and sublime writings, *abundantly identify his person, and authenticate his epistles*. Then we have Josephus, generally acknowledged the most faithful and candid of historians.

In Alexandria, at the very time, lived Philo the Jew, a man of great capacity and extensive learning, and of great estimation both as a public and literary character, but particularly distinguished for his theological studies and his knowledge of all sects then in vogue in religion and philosophy. In the same place and at the same time, lived Apion the leader of the Grecian party, who accompanied Philo to Rome, and afterwards accused him and his brethren before Caius Caligula because they would not suffer the statue of that emperor to be erected in their temple. Then at Rome we have Seneca, Tacitus, Pliny, to mention whom is sufficient eulogium; and a few years later, Plutarch and Pliny the Younger, with many other writers of genius and talents, curious to discover and eager to investigate all the phenomena both of the natural and moral world; and may we be permitted to add Pilate and the other Roman governors, who cannot be supposed destitute of a portion of the learning and taste of that accomplished period. Let it also be remembered, that Judea being then a Roman province the intercourse was no less frequent between Jerusalem and Rome than at present between Great Britain and her American colonies.

But to begin with Paul: read all his epistles from beginning to end, and you will not discover the least trace that any document then existed bearing the name of any of the four Evangelists, or of any memoranda in writing, or memoir whatever of the life of Christ, although his last letter to Timothy from Rome is, with every appearance of probability, supposed to have been written in the year 64 or 65 of the Christian era; some indeed suppose, but without foundation, that Paul, when he speaks of "my gospel," is to be understood as speaking of the gospel of Luke; but it is evident the apostle only means the gospel or doctrine which he himself preached, and the holy scriptures of which he speaks, which Timothy had learned from his youth, is universally allowed to mean no more than the Jewish scriptures, or what we call the Old Testament⁶. But to say

⁶ Michaele's Introductory Lectures, b. i. sec. i. The sacred writers

no more of Paul at present, as we shall have occasion to advert to him more at large before we conclude.

Let us now turn to Josephus: he was born about the time of Christ's death, and writes the history of that period down to the taking of Jerusalem, at which he was present; this event happened about forty years after, and although he is allowed to possess all the requisites for an historian, learned, industrious, candid, he says not a word about Evangelists, nor does he make the smallest allusion to the stupendous miracles performed by Jesus during his life, nor of the still more stupendous miracle of his ascension into heaven. We read in the gospel that the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom at the death of Christ; "the rocks were rent, and the graves opened and many bodies of saints arose and went into the holy city and appeared to many; and that darkness was over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour⁷." But Josephus, although nothing rare or curious, nothing *extraordinary* or *marvellous* seems to have escaped him, says not a word of these wonderful occurrences; yet what events have ever happened among men so worthy of the special regard of the historian? He indeed gives a description of the veil of the temple, and a very magnificent thing it appears to have been⁸, but says not a word of its having been torn in any manner whatever, whether natural or supernatural. And here it is no doubt needless to advert to that famous and long-disputed passage which is now so generally exploded as spurious; indeed it is evident at the first glance, to be an interpolation, it is neither the language nor sentiments of Josephus. It is a meagre scrap, and betrays the fears of the fabricator, and may be compared to a small patch of course canvass in a web of fine linen.

In the common copies of Josephus we have a long dissertation by the translator, endeavouring to persuade us that Josephus was an Ebionite Christian; but where should we look for a proof of this so ready as in his own works,

make use of no title to denote the collective books of the New Testament, they sometimes refer to their former epistles, and Peter quotes Paul, &c. &c. and in a note, "It is pretended indeed that "*pasa graphæ*," all scripture, 2 Tim. iii. ver. 16. must agreeably to Paul's meaning, comprehend the books of the New Testament; but it is plain that "all scripture" means no more than the "holy scriptures did in verse 15, and as Timothy had learned these from a child, they could hardly include the writings of the apostles."—See M'Knight also.

⁷ Matthew xxvii. ver. 51.

⁸ Josephus' Antiquities, b. iii. chap. 6.—See note.

particularly in that part of his authentic works where he speaks of death and a future state; at a time too when his sincerity cannot be questioned, as he expected every moment to be his last⁹; for as to what we have as extracts from his discourse concerning Hades, the Sibylline oracles themselves, are not more evidently false. But it is impossible to read his history without being fully persuaded that Josephus was totally unacquainted with the books of the Evangelists, as well as with the principal facts which those books contain.

However, about the time that Jesus began his ministry, when Coponius, the immediate predecessor of Pilate, was procurator of Judea, he tells us that "a certain Galilean,¹⁰ whose name was Judas, prevailed with his countrymen to revolt, and said they were cowards to endure to pay a tax to the Romans, and would, after God, submit to mortal man as their Lord. This man was teacher of a peculiar sect of his own, and was not at all like the rest of those their leaders." Indeed it appears this leader had excellent materials in Galilee to work upon for the Essenes, whose principles they most resemble, are, says he, "Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another, than the other sects have, they reject pleasure as an evil, and esteem continence and the conquest over our passions, to be virtues." And again, "these men are dispisers of riches, and so very liberal as to raise our admiration, nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another, for it is a law among them, that those who join their society. must let what they have be common to the whole order:" and in the eighteenth Book of his Antiquities, speaking of the followers of Judas of Galilee: "they have an unavoidable attachment to liberty, and say that God is their only ruler and Lord, they also do not value any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the death of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man Lord." The reader it is hoped will excuse these details from Josephus, the more because some of the tenets of these sectaries, bear a strong resemblance to those of the first Christians¹¹, and although

⁹ Josephus' Jewish Wars, b. iii. chap. 8. vol. V. p. 275.

¹⁰ b. ii. chap. 8.

¹¹ The same contempt of riches. "Sell thy goods, (says Jesus) and give to the poor, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, and the disciples had all things in common."

"There is no man that hath left house and brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, but shall receive an

it is impossible to confound Jesus of Nazareth with Judas of Galilee, yet they both appeared about the same time and in the same country; besides, these passages appear to possess a peculiar interest, being all that we have to supply the place of those important events related by the Evangelists.

He also informs us, Josephus' Wars, Chap. ix. Section 2. that "Pilate, who was sent procurator into Judea by Tiberias, sent by night those images of Cæsar called ensigns, into Jerusalem:" and states, at considerable length, the indignation and horror of the Jews, at this procedure, and shows how ready they all were to suffer death, even when surrounded by his soldiers, rather than submit to such an infringement of the religion and laws of their ancestors:" and shortly after, when Felix was governor, Chap. xiii. section 4. "there was a body of wicked men, gotten together, not so impure in their actions, (as the robbers who infested the neighbourhood of Jerusalem) but more wicked in their intentions which wasted the city, no less than did these murderers: these were such men as deceived and deluded the people under pretence of divine inspiration, but were for procuring innovations and changes in the government." "There was also an Egyptian that did the Jews more mischief than the former, for he was a cheat and pretended to be a prophet, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him; these he led round about from the Wilderness to the Mount, which is called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem, from that place, but Felix baffled his attempt, and the Egyptian escaped.

Thus have I taken a rapid glance of the Jewish wars immediately before and after the period of Christ's crucifixion, but not a single expression do I find which seems in the most distant manner to refer to that event, or to the history

hundred fold." "Take no thought for your life," &c. The same contempt of suffering and death, whether of themselves, or their parents and friends.

"Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the Counsel, and they will scourge you in the synagogues, &c. Fear them not, fear not them that kill the body," &c.

"Let me first go and bury my father," "let the dead bury their dead," "follow thou me." "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."

The same contempt of honours and titles in calling no man master or lord, the same liberty and equality; "Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master." "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord, it is enough that the disciple be as his master, and the servant as his lord." Also in their conquest over the passions: "whosoever looketh on a woman," &c. "If a man smite thee," &c.

of it, not a single expression which implies that he had ever heard the name of any of the four Evangelists mentioned as author of any book or history whatever; yet this work was written eighteen years before his *Antiquities*, when all these transactions were recent and ready to occur to the historian; and here it would be most reasonable to look for an account of Christ's life and sufferings, instead of which the spurious article lately mentioned is omitted here and inserted in the *Antiquities*. Now we may observe, that what is worthy of being recorded eighteen years hence, is surely deserving of notice to-day. In fact the forgery is too palpable to require a formal refutation, for none of the early writers of the three first centuries, though often hard pressed by their opponents the Jews, against whom it would have proved, if found in *Josephus*, "*an argumentum ad hominem*," of the most powerful and overwhelming kind, seem to know any thing about it, until Eusebius, whom, as a noble author truly says, an improbability seldom stops, brought it forward about the year 324¹².

The authenticity of this article was long as strenuously defended as if the fate of Christianity had depended upon it, but the best informed writers of the present day have entirely abandoned it, and Doctor Chalmers seems to think it undeserving of the least notice, for he says, "*the entire silence of Josephus upon the subject of Christianity, though he wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem and gives us the history of that period in which Christ and his apostles lived, is certainly a very striking circumstance*¹³." Yet Paley parts with it with apparent regret, for he observes, if this passage be not genuine, "*the silence of Josephus was designed.*" But is it not far more reasonable to infer that

¹² Origen, who wrote from 230 to 250, contradicts it by something more than silence: "*Josephus*," says he, "(though he *did not believe in Christ*,") when investigating the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, says, 'these miseries befel the Jews by way of revenge for James the Just, who was the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ,' because they had slain him who was a most righteous person, when he ought (says Origen) to have said their machinations *against Jesus* were the cause; because they had slain Christ who was foretold by the prophets."

Now some reflections of this kind are certainly to be found in *Josephus*, and although Origen has not quoted him correctly; for it stands, "these miseries befel the Jews for the death of John the Baptist, *not James*." *Antiquities* xviii. chap. 5. sec. 2 The inference, however, is the same, that the article respecting Jesus in our present copies of *Josephus* did not exist in the time of Origen.—Origen contra Celsus L. i. and Comment. Matthew 230.

¹³ Book V. 151.

as this article is proved to be an interpolation, that the history of Josephus must have been sadly mutilated, and that in the place where it is inserted, a less agreeable narrative has been omitted by *design*; for Josephus is universally allowed to be a faithful historian, while the pious frauds and forgeries of the first century are known to all, and justly reprobated by every candid historian¹⁴." But Josephus was a *Jew*, and the *prejudice* of the Jews against the Messiah is known;—should we not rather say the great national enthusiasm, the high hopes and expectation of the Jews respecting the Messiah is known: "Salvation is of the Jews," says Christ. Jesus himself was a Jew, the apostles were Jews, all the miracles of Christ and his ascension into heaven must have been witnessed by Jews, so that if they were well satisfied with these, nothing could better have proved the claim of Jesus to the character of the Messiah, and nothing could be better calculated to flatter their pride as a nation; therefore I conceive the silence of Josephus must be accounted for in some other way than by his *prejudice*.

We now proceed to inquire what Philo knows of this extraordinary affair. Philo was older than Josephus, for he was deputed (as we have already seen) by his brethren at Alexandria to defend their cause before the emperor Caligula successor of Tiberius, and therefore flourished during the very time of Christ's ministry. Eusebius knowing the importance of such a witness would fain persuade us that Philo's minute and curious description of the Therapeutæ certainly refers to the first Christians, and under this idea he praises him highly. "In the time of this emperor Caius, lived Philo, a man highly esteemed, not only by Jews and *Christians*, but also by the Heathens; he was a Jew by birth, and his family inferior to none in Alexandria; of his high attainments in divine and human knowledge his own laborious works bear ample testimony, while his intimate acquaintance with philosophy and polite literature needs not our eulogium, for he is said to have far excelled all his contemporaries in a knowledge of the Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy." Lord Bolingbroke observes: "Nothing can be more admirable than the sanctity and austerity of this sect, (the Therapeutæ,) whether appearing in the world or in their solitudes; and Eusebius, whom an improbability seldom stops, would have made Christians of them as several ancient and modern divines have endeavoured to do

¹⁴ See Moshem, vol. I.

after him, but to no purpose. Christianity was little spread, scarce known, and scarce distinguished from Judaism when Philo gave an account of this sect: but this sect had long been in the fullness of fame before it had been imitated by Christians."

Moshiem, too, concludes with some very judicious remarks upon the Therapeutæ, in these words: "It is, however, certain that they were neither Christians nor Egyptians, as some erroneously imagined; they were undoubtedly Jews, nay, they gloried in that title¹⁵." But grant Eusebius to be right, yet he proves too much in describing the accuracy of Philo and his knowledge of the first Christians, for if so, he must also have heard of the miracles of Christ, his resurrection, and ascension into heaven, of which, however, there is not the most distant allusion throughout his whole works, nor does it appear that he had ever heard of those books of ours which contain that history.

We now come to Tacitus; and, amidst this profound silence of contemporary historians, it is some relief to hear him mention even the name of Christian, although in terms of contempt and abhorrence. Speaking of the fire which happened at Rome in the time of Nero, and the suspicion that prevailed that the emperor himself was privy to it, he says: "But neither these exertions nor his liberality to the populace, nor his offerings to the Gods, could remove the infamous imputation that he himself had ordered the city to be set on fire; to put an end therefore to this report, he laid the guilt, and inflicted the most cruel punishment upon a set of people who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and called by the vulgar Christians. The founder of that name was Christ, who suffered death in the reign of Tiberius; under the procurator Pontius Pilate, this pernicious superstition, thus checked for a while, broke out again and spread not only over Judea, where the evil originated, but through Rome also, whither every thing bad upon earth finds its way and is practiced; some who first confessed were seized and afterwards a vast multitude by their information were apprehended, who were convicted, not so much of the crime of burning Rome, as of hatred to mankind; their sufferings at their execution were aggravated by insult and mockery, for some were disguised in the skins of wild beasts and worried to death by dogs, some were crucified, and others wrapped in pitched shirts and set on fire when the day closed that they might serve as lights to illuminate the

¹⁵ Ecclesiastical History, vol. I. page 46.

night. Nero lent his own gardens for these executions, and exhibited at the same time a mock circensian entertainment, being a spectator of the whole in the dress of a charioteer, sometimes mingling with the crowd on foot and sometimes viewing the spectacle from his car. This conduct made the sufferers pitied, and though they were criminals and deserving the severest punishment, yet they were considered as sacrificed, not so much out of a regard to the public good, as to gratify the cruelty of one man."

Here we certainly have a most horrid description of the wanton cruelty and unprovoked barbarity of Nero, that fiend in human form, against an unoffending and defenceless people; and while we lament the ignorance of the historian with respect to the real source of the Christian's fortitude under the infliction of punishments so sanguinary, we cannot withhold our admiration of that impartiality and love of truth which led him to do justice to those objects of his contempt, by fixing the crime upon the real author.

That Tacitus was totally ignorant of the true character of the Christians, their motives, manners, and habits, cannot be doubted, and that he had been led to form these erroneous opinions from the account he had received, or from what he might himself have witnessed of the contempt which they entertained towards every object of the heathen worship, and the boldness with which they often, in defiance of the magistrates, insulted their deities and derided their offerings even in their own temples; but, in proving his ignorance upon these points, do we not also prove his ignorance of the gospel history, his entire ignorance of the life and character of Jesus, his miracles, resurrection, and ascension into heaven? In short, that even in that enlightened period this most intelligent historian knew nothing more of Christ than that he was put to death at Jerusalem, under the government of Pontius Pilate.

Had Tacitus been an indolent spectator of passing events his ignorance would not be matter of surprise, but when we recollect with what industry he has collected, with what precision and intelligence he has recorded, every event of importance for nearly forty years after the death of Christ; and whither in the loftiest style of history he describes the destruction of Jerusalem, or descend to amuse his reader according to the taste of the time with the miracle performed by Vespasian in the cure of a blind man at Alexandria, we must be convinced that nothing deserving the attention of mankind, to which he could obtain access, had

escaped his notice. Now in the official dispatches of the Roman generals commanding in Judea, in private communications from their secretaries and literary men who always accompany great expeditions, and lastly by comparing notes with Josephus who came to Rome with Titus after the siege, or by corresponding with the governors or procurators of the provinces, it is evident that Tacitus possessed the best sources of information, whether on matters civil or military, sacred or profane; and if any one or more of the Evangelists had been published previous to the siege of Jerusalem, is it not probable that he would have received some information on the subject; and as he has done justice to the Christians in so far as to acquit them of all concern in the burning of the city, it is highly improbable that he would have suppressed all mention of the interesting facts which these books contain. At any rate, had he ever seen or heard of them, his *ignorance* upon the subject would not have appeared so *palpable*.

We now pass on to Seneca who, amidst the atrocities practiced against the poor Christians, had also the misfortune to fall into disgrace; his late pupil, now Emperor, could no longer brook restraint, the advice and council of his amiable tutor which had hitherto been a check upon the natural ferocity of his temper, became irksome to him, he now appeared cold and distant, then loading him with reproaches, and at last throwing off all disguise, he proceeded to take away his life; thus aggravating by the blackest ingratitude, a cruel and most atrocious murder. Seneca's morals are well known, at least by name, but until we have a better translation of his works than I have yet seen his merit will not be duly appreciated, and notwithstanding the cavils of some Christian writers, if we consider the manners of the age, and make such allowance as every human production requires, we shall be obliged to confess that nothing upon the subject of morals has ever appeared to compare with Seneca. He was certainly a lover of truth and virtue, and his testimony would have added considerable weight to the Christian cause; indeed, this seems to have been felt in the first ages when the subject was better understood than at present, for among the spurious gospels and other pious forgeries mentioned by Moshem, we have a long correspondence between Seneca and Paul; this is no doubt a silly fabrication, and totally unworthy of both those great writers, and he must have been a very bold or a very ignorant man who could pretend to personate Paul and Seneca.

However there is not a word in all his voluminous works which indicate that he had ever heard of Matthew and his brother historians, or of those wonderful events which they narrate, yet Seneca was not so far removed from this transaction as Christians are apt to imagine, for he was the brother of that Gallio, deputy of Achaia before whose tribunal Paul was called; who, it is said, "cared for none of these things¹⁶;" and would not attend to the disputes of the Jews. But it is evident to me that the second epistle of Peter, where he describes the general conflagration and final destruction of the universe, has been copied almost word for word from Seneca. Indeed this will not appear surprising, nor will the observation offend the pious, when it is recollected that this second epistle was not acknowledged by the first Christians¹⁷.

But we must not overlook Suetonius who lived shortly after, and writes the history of the twelve Cæsars. He mentions the Christians and just glances at their punishment under Nero; and in the time of Claudius, he says, in so many words, that the Jews raised a tumult in the city, *Christus* being their leader; this evidently is a great mistake, and nothing can save the historian from the charge of negligence the most reprehensible, but the entire ignorance in which he and all of them appear to have remained with regard to those great and marvellous events which we have been taught to believe, were known to all the world.

Now if this be actually the state of the case, if my repre-

¹⁶ Acts xviii. ver. 12 to 18. "And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat, saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked leudness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment-seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat: and Gallio cared for none of those things."

¹⁷ Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, b. iii. chap. 25. Among the books of the New Testament generally acknowledged as genuine "are in the first place (says he) to be ranked the four Gospels, the Acts, and Epistles of Paul, &c. Among the contradicted yet known to many, are the Epistle of James, Jude, and the second of Peter." And Hammond observes, "that the first of Peter and first of John, having from the beginning been received as authentic, obtained the name of Catholic Epistles, to distinguish them from the Epistle of James, the second Epistle of Peter, &c. which were for a while doubted of and by many not considered as a rule of faith."—M'Knight's preface to James.

sentation be fair and impartial, and I am not conscious of having used any disguise, what becomes of Dr. Chalmers' argument? he surely will not pretend that Irenæus and Clemens of Alexandria, Origin, &c. writers of the second and third centuries, *who first speak of the gospels*, were contemporaries of the Evangelists, or that their testimony is sufficient to compensate for the silence of Paul and Tacitus, Josephus, Philo, and Seneca, who lived in the same age; for it is obvious that the existence of any document in the second and third century is no proof of its having existed in the middle of the first century.

But we sometimes meet with men who are equally regardless of Doctor Chalmers' arguments and mine; and I may be told, as I have often been told, "that the gospel was not designed for the wise and learned; that in fact if it had been received by such men as Tacitus and Philo, it could not be true, for it would contradict itself, as it is expressly said, 'that not many wise, not many learned, were to embrace it,' that it was to be 'a stumbling block to the Jew and foolishness to the Greeks;'" and "that the foolish things of this world were to confound the things that are wise¹⁸." This, indeed, admits of no reply; reason and argument would here be entirely thrown away; for if the gospel be addressed exclusively to those who have not the use of the reasoning faculty, or to those who do not exercise that faculty, what shall we think of Locke, Addison, Leland, Campbell, Reid, Paley, Chalmers, and a number of others of the same school? Surely they have been fighting the wind, and instead of building on solid ground have been building castles in the air, or have "founded their house upon the sand."

But after all, is it possible to dispense with reason in matters of faith? I apprehend not; otherwise we should be every moment the dupes of the most designing and daring imposters. Besides, the use of reason is necessary when one text of scripture seems to contradict another, like those I have just quoted compared with others of the same author, who tells us, "we ought to be ready to give a reason for our faith," "to prove all things, and hold to that which is good;" and with that of John who says, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world;" and finally, Paul says, "If any man or angel preach any other gospel than that which I have preached, let him be ac-

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians i. ver. 27.

cursed¹⁹." Now here, one would think, is scope for the reasoning faculty, and to reconcile these texts it is necessary to consider the drift of the apostle's argument; and that a little learning is also requisite, for Peter tells us, that Paul has advanced some things "hard to be understood, which the *unlearned* and unstable wrest to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures." There are also a multitude of various readings in manuscripts of the New Testament which require the exercise of reason and sound criticism to distinguish the true from the false²⁰. But the spirit of the age accords so fully with the sentiments of those great names mentioned above, that it would be a complete waste of time to say a word more upon the subject. However I cannot help observing that those very persons who reject reason, and affect to despise human testimony in matters of faith, are the most forward to catch at every silly tale which pious fraud or folly has fabricated; to these Eusebius affords an

¹⁹ And thus Paul is supposed to have said in allusion to some persons who had been deputed by James and the other apostles at Jerusalem, to oppose his innovations.—See M'Knight.

²⁰ "With respect to the various readings of the books of the New Testament," observes M'Knight, "about which Deists have made such a noise, and well disposed persons have expressed such fears, as if the sacred text were thereby rendered uncertain, I may take upon me to affirm that the clamours of the former and the fears of the latter are without foundation. Before the invention of printing there was no method of multiplying the copies of books but by transcribing them, and the persons who followed that business being liable, through carelessness, to transpose, omit, and alter not only letters but words, and even whole sentences; it is plain the more frequently any book was transcribed the more numerous would be the variations from the original text in the one that was last transcribed, because in the new copy, besides the errors peculiar to the one from which it was taken, there would be all those also which the transcriber himself might fall into through carelessness. If, therefore, the MSS. which remain of any ancient book are of a late date and few in number, the defects and errors of such book will be many and the various readings few; and as it is by the various readings alone that the defects and errors of particular copies can be redressed, the imperfections of that book will be without remedy: of this Hesychius among the Greeks, and Valleius Paterculus among the Latins, are striking examples; for as there is but one MS. copy of each of these authors remaining, the numerous errors and defects in them are past all redress. Happily this is not the case with the books of the New Testament, of which there are more MSS. of different ages than of any other ancient writing. Wherefore, although by collating these MSS. different readings to the amount of many thousands have appeared, the text, instead of being rendered uncertain thereby, hath been fixed with greater precision, because, with the help of sound criticism, *learned men*, from the vast variety of readings obtained by comparing different copies, have been able to select almost with certainty those readings which originally composed the sacred text."—Vol. I. p. 63.

inexhaustible fund, for whether we consider the famous correspondence between Jesus Christ and Abgarus king of Edessa, which he extracted from the records of that nation; the story of John the Evangelist who lived to the age of 102, and who it was thought would never die; or the article about Jesus Christ in Josephus, which in the year 324 had been seen for the first time, his credulity, and the credulity of his admirers, whether in his own or in the present age will be abundantly manifest; but the letter from Pilate to Tiberius, and the anxiety of that Emperor to have Jesus enrolled among the gods, we must not pass by. Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, Lib. II. chap. ii. says, "when the wonderful resurrection of our Saviour and his ascension into heaven became the topic of all men; as it was the ancient practice of the governors of provinces to inform the Emperor of every thing extraordinary which had occurred amongst them, in order that nothing might be hid from him, Pilate transmitted an account of the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ, of which the fame was great throughout all Judea, to Tiberius the Emperor, informing him also of the many miracles which he had heard that Jesus had performed, and who being again raised from the dead was almost universally esteemed a God. Tiberius indeed, as is said, reported the affair to the Senate; the Senate however rejected the report under pretence of not having examined the affair; there being an old law of the Romans, that no deity should be created without a decree of the Senate, but in truth because the divine word of salvation did not require the aid of man to publish it; but although the Senate threw out the communication concerning our Saviour, yet Tiberius, we are told, would not suffer any severity to be exercised against the doctrine of Christ." Such is the account of Eusebius, which however we must do him the justice to say is copied from Tertullian, a celebrated orator and apologist for Christianity in the second century.

Now we own it is highly probable that Pilate might have made some report of this affair to the emperor, and that he would have sent it to the senate, but that any further notice should have been taken of it without regular evidence of the facts is not probable. Yet if the narrative of our Evangelists or any other properly attested document had accompanied the report, is it possible that the historians and other learned men of that time could have been so ignorant of the origin of Christianity, or think its professors so reprehensible?

But the story is to be taken with some grains of allowance, having no doubt received a little embellishment in coming through the hands of the orator, whose judgement it appears was not equal to his genius: but let us hear what Moshien says of him. Speaking of the sect of Montanus; "It was formed by Montanus, an obscure man without capacity or strength of judgment; this weak man was foolish and extravagant enough to take it into his head that he was the paraclete or comforter which the divine Saviour at his departure from the earth promised to send to his disciples to lead them to all truth; the excessive austerity of this fanatic did not stop here, he showed the same aversion to the noblest employments of the mind that he did to the innocent enjoyments of life, and gave it as his opinion that philosophy, arts, and whatever savoured of polite literature, should be mercilessly banished from the Christian church²¹:" then he adds,—“the most eminent and learned of all the followers of this rigid enthusiast was Tertullian, a man of great learning and genius, but of an austere and melancholy natural temper; this great man by adopting the sentiments of Montanus, and maintaining his cause with fortitude and even vehemence in a multitude of books written upon the occasion, has shewn to the world a mortifying spectacle of the deviations of which human nature is capable, even in those whom it seems to have approached the nearest to perfection²²:" and again,—“notwithstanding his extensive and profound learning his credulity and superstition were such as might be expected of the darkest ignorance²³.”

So much for the famous apologist; and if we were, from the same excellent author, to give an abstract of the life of Origin and other early fathers²⁴ of the church, we should find equal reason to lament that learning and genius are so seldom united with the faculty of judging right. In fact, so many wild theories were then broached, so many heresies prevailed, that in reading Moshien we are naturally led to ask,—where was the true Christian? where was the church? that pure church, of which Protestants delight to cherish so fair an idea, before the days of Popery?

Let us now refer to Pliny, to see how far his account tallies with the foregoing: his epistle to the emperor Trajan, written in the beginning of the second century has always been considered by Christians as an important article; and

²¹ Ecclesiastical History, vol. I. chap. v. sec. 23.

²² Sec. 24.

²³ Chap. ii. sec. 5.

²⁴ See also Lactantius' indecent illustration of the miraculous conception.

although known to some, will, I am persuaded, be new to many, as it has seldom appeared but in a garbled and mutilated form; yet there is no doubt that such documents, if faithfully translated and brought, if I may so speak, to a focus, will enable the reader to judge for himself, better than all the eloquence that has been lavished on this subject; for our polemical divines instead of leading us to the discovery of truth seem only desirous of turning our attention to some other object; they put me in mind of the lapwing who waits not the approach of the school-boy coming in search of her nest, but flies to meet him, wheels round his head and flaps her wings, then flutters at his feet, and rolls before him like a ball, till with surprising address she has drawn him from the spot which contains the object of his pursuit; so with an ingenuity, less natural indeed, but not less dextrous, those rhetoricians endeavour to prevent the discovery of truth.—However Pliny²⁵, in his epistle to the Emperor Trajan, says, “On all subjects of difficulty it has been my constant practice to apply to you, Sir, who can best instruct me when ignorant, and resolve my doubts when I ought to hesitate. Not having been present at the examination of the Christians, I am unacquainted with the mode of enquiry which has been followed, and also with the nature of the punishment hitherto inflicted, and I have considerable doubt whether some distinction ought not to be made on account of the age of the accused, or whether the same degree of punishment ought to be awarded against those of tender years as against those of mature age; whether repentance be a plea for pardon, or whether those who have been Christians, but have renounced the profession, ought to avail themselves of that circumstance, in short, whether the bare name without the crimes, or whether the crimes attached to that name are to be the ground of punishment?”

“In the mean time I have followed this course with regard to those who have been brought before me as Christians: I asked them, are you a Christian or not? If they confessed, I asked a second and third time, mingling threats with my interrogatories; but if they adhered to this confession, I ordered them for execution, not doubting that such inflexible obstinacy deserved to be punished, let their confession be what it might.

“I have met with some of this mad set among Roman citizens; these I have ordered to be sent to Rome. Some

²⁵ Pliny was proconsul of Bethynia, and addressed this letter to the Emperor about the year 112. (*Anno domini.*)

time after these examinations, as is usual, the crime began to spread again, and many more cases were brought before me; an anonymous libel too was brought containing a great number of names; these denied that they were or had ever been Christians, they called upon the Gods, and with frankincense and wine, which I ordered to be brought, they supplicated your image, and finally they cursed Christ: none of which things, as I am informed, can those who are really Christians be compelled to do; so I thought fit to let them go. Some of those upon the list indeed said they were Christians, but immediately after denied it, saying, that they had been Christians but had renounced it, some for three years, some for more, and one person said he had not practised it these twenty years; all of whom worshipped your image and the images of the gods, and they all cursed Christ. Yet they generally assured me that their principal fault or error was that they were accustomed on a certain day to meet before daylight and to sing alternately a hymn to Christ as a God, and to oblige themselves by an oath not to do any bad actions, that they would not be guilty of theft or adultery, that they would be faithful to their promise nor deny a deposit when demanded back; then they usually departed, but met again at a common but innocent meal, which however they had left off in consequence of the edict which I published by your order, and in which I had prohibited such meetings. From the result of these examinations, I judged it necessary to try to discover the true state of the case by torture, which I ordered against two female slaves called deaconesses; yet I discovered no more than that they were addicted to a bad and extravagant superstition. I then gave up all further enquiry until I should communicate it to you, for it appears to demand the strictest attention on account of the number of persons of every rank, age, and sex, who are in danger and likely to be called to an account; for this superstition is spread like a contagion, not only in cities and towns but also in villages; yet there is reason to hope it may be stopped and corrected, the more so as the temples which were almost deserted begin again to be frequented, and the holy solemnities which had been long neglected begin to be revived: the sacrifices also sell well everywhere, of which of late few purchasers could be found; whence it may easily be imagined what a multitude of persons may be reclaimed if room be given for repentance."

Trajan, in answer to the above: "My Pliny, in examin-

ing the causes of those who have been charged with being Christians, you have pursued the method which you ought; for indeed no certain or general form of judging can be ordained in this case. These people are not to be sought for, but if they be accused and convicted they are to be punished, but with this precaution, that he who denies being a Christian and makes it appear that he is not so by supplicating the Gods, although he had been so formerly, may be allowed pardon upon his repentance. As for libels sent without an author, they ought to have no place in any accusation whatever, for it would not only be a bad precedent but quite unsuitable to the practice of my reign."

Amidst the multitude of reflections, that occur on reading this correspondence, the most prominent seems to be the extraordinary contrast that exists between this, and the preceding account from Eusebius; by the one we are taught to believe that Christ and his Gospel had been the subject of much interest with public men: Tiberius and the Senate are engaged in serious discussion, whether Christ should not be admitted among the Gods; and, although the Emperor was over-ruled in this, he, notwithstanding, patronized the preaching of the Gospel. Yet, in the course of a few years, we see Pliny writing to his master, representing the Christians as a set of the most obscure, weak, and superstitious of mortals, and although he is obliged to confess their innocence, he yet considers them deluded and destitute of all ground for their belief, for neither he nor the Emperor seem so much as to have heard of the name of Christ, (whom they mention but to blaspheme) much less of his miraculous resurrection, and ascension into heaven; and if our Gospels were then published, as it is likely they were, these politicians appear to have known nothing about the matter.

Indeed public men of that age seem to have entertained the same contempt for Christians, and the Christian cause, as our grand-children might to be supposed to have for the disciples of Johanna Southcote, if sixty or eighty years hence they should take it into their heads to publish an account of her life, and character, in which, besides what we know of this pious lady, they should affirm that she had actually risen from the grave on the third day, as she predicted, and had been seen by all the people of London, ascending into heaven, with the Shiloh in her arms, giving as authors of this narrative, and witnesses of the scene, some of those persons who were known to have been most intimate with her, when in life: when on reference to the Weekly Register of

the time, they would find that Johanna had been deceived by a *lying spirit*, and the Shiloh had evaporated into air.

Such I say, false and injurious as we all know it to be, is the feeling which these great and learned men seem to have entertained for the infant church, so truly has the apostle said, "Not many wise, not many learned," &c. And here, at least, may these words be literally applied.

I have mentioned Plutarch, and with him shall conclude. He lived about the same time, but it does not appear that he had any knowledge of the Gospel history, or if he had the following account of the apotheosis of Romulus, with the reflections which accompany it, must appear to every reader as expressive of his total disbelief of the subject.

"When Romulus disappeared," says he, "neither the least part of his body, nor of his clothes were to be seen, so that some imagined that while he was holding an assembly of the Senate in the Temple of Vulcan, the senators fell upon him and cut his body in pieces, and each took a part away in his bosom: others say that it happened while he was holding an assembly of the people without the city, near the Goat's Marsh, and that on a sudden strange and unaccountable disorders arose in the air, the sun was darkened, and the day was turned into a tempestuous night, with dreadful thunders and boisterous winds, blowing from all quarters, which scattered the populace, though the senators kept close together.

The tempest being over, and the light breaking out, when the people gathered again, they missed, and enquired for, their king, but the senators would not let them search nor busy themselves about the matter, but commanded them to honour and worship Romulus, as one taken up to the Gods, and who, after having been a good prince, was now to be to them a propitious Deity; the multitude went away with great satisfaction, worshipping him, in hopes of his favour and protection. But some who canvassed the matter more rigorously, accused the Patricians of being themselves the murderers of the king, and along with this, circulated many ridiculous tales against them. Being in this disorder it is said Julius Proculus, a Patrician of noble family, and of an excellent character, and intimate friend of Romulus, who came with him from Alba, presented himself to the people, and with a most solemn oath, declared that as he was travelling on the road, Romulus met him in bright and glittering armour, with an aspect more noble and august, than while he was living, and that he being terrified with the

apparition, said how have we deserved O King! to be exposed to such cruel and unjust calumnies? And why is your orphan city left thus destitute and distressed? And that he answered, it pleased the Gods, Oh! Proculus, after I had remained a certain time among men and built a city which will be hereafter the greatest in the world, both in empire and glory, that I should again return to heaven from whence I came; farewell! and tell the Romans, that by the exercise of temperance and fortitude, they shall arrive at the highest pitch of human power, and I, the God of Quirinus, will be ever propitious to them."

"This seemed very credible to the Romans, (continues he) both on account of the honesty and oath of him that spoke it, and a certain enthusiasm seizing them all, no one contradicted it, but laying aside all jealousies they worshipped Quirinius as a God." After some other accounts of the same kind, Plutarch concludes with the following reflections:—

"Many such improbabilities do fabulous writers relate deifying creatures naturally mortal; indeed, altogether to deny the power of virtue is an impious and illiberal sentiment, but to confound earth with heaven, is as stupidly ridiculous; therefore we must reject such fables, being assured that according to Pindar,

‘ Our bodies shrink to dust by death’s decree,
The soul survives and fills eternity.’

"For that alone is derived from the Gods, thence it comes and thither it returns, not with the body, but when it is most free and separated from it, and is altogether pure and disengaged from the, flesh for a virtuous soul is, as Heraclitus expresses it, a pure and unmixed light."

PART III.



THUS we have taken a cursory view of some of the most eminent writers who lived at, or near, the time that our Gospels are said to have been written. We have examined Paul, Seneca, Josephus, Philo, Tacitus, Pliny, and Plutarch, but cannot discover the least trace throughout the whole of their writings, that they had any knowledge of these Gospels, or of Matthew, Mark, &c. as the authors of them or of any other book. We have given the more attention to this subject, because, Doctor Chalmers claims (as has been already said) the same respect for these books, even considered as human composition, as we allow to the writings of Tacitus, Cæsar, or of any other ancient historian; but on the principles laid down by M^r Knight, to which we have already adverted, this seems impossible, for in the one case, the consent of mankind is universal, in the other, neither the period of the publication, nor the personal identity of the authors are fully ascertained, and it would appear from the silence of contemporaries, and from the sentiments of modern writers, most competent to determine a question of such difficulty, “that the Gospels were not (as Paley says,) the *cause* of Christianity being *believed*, but the *consequence of that belief*.” But Moshien has shown that the time when the collection was made of the books of the New Testament, as well as the authors of that collection, is quite uncertain, but that they were read by every congregation by the middle of the second century, from all which I think it obvious to infer, that the Gospel history as contained in the four Evangelists was not published before the siege of Jerusalem.

Now if this be the case, and I think it cannot admit of a doubt, we shall be at a loss to account for the general and rapid spread of the Gospel, which appears so evident from the letters of Pliny, and even at a still earlier period from the annals of Tacitus: and, indeed it is difficult to conceive that this narrative, (the Gospel history) such as it has appeared by an impartial review, could have been sufficient of itself to propagate, and establish so universal and firm a belief of the facts contained in it; for although some have doubted of the truth of the things recorded of Jesus, yet there is no

question that many individuals by no means despicable on the score of abilities, and even some men of genius and talents, have, in every age of the church, firmly, and I doubt not from conviction, maintained the truth of the Gospel narrative.

To what then are we to ascribe so general a belief of matters so contrary to the course of nature, and the experience of mankind; if we look for a cause proportioned to the effect, we must think it perfectly incredible, that a few illiterate men, could so soon have changed the religious sentiments of mankind; for can we suppose, as Paley observes, "that a Galilean peasant *accompanied with a few fishermen*; that Jesus without force, without power, without support, without one external circumstance of attraction or influence, should prevail against the prejudices, the learning, the hierarchy of his country, against the ancient religious opinions, the pompous religious rites, the philosophy, the wisdom, the authority of the Roman Empire, in the most polished and enlightened period of its existence¹." And again, "The success therefore of Mahometanism, stands not in the way of this important conclusion, that the propagation of Christianity in the manner, and under the circumstances in which it was propagated is a *unique* in the history of the species, a Jewish peasant overthrew the religion of the world."

Now here we may perceive the cause is totally inadequate to the effect; every thing appears supernatural; learning, genius, and eloquence, instead of assisting to solve the problem, are exerted to the utmost to increase our embarrassment; and I must observe that while men are so fond of the marvellous, the discovery of truth must be extremely difficult, or will for ever remain unattainable; but the philosophy of the present age will not permit us to ascribe any event to supernatural agency, if it be possible to discover a sufficient physical or moral cause.

I shall therefore endeavour to show that such a cause does exist, and when I mention the name of *Paul*, whose indefatigable exertions, unrivalled genius, and eloquence, joined to an enthusiasm of mind, unparalleled in the history of the world; the reader will immediately perceive that such an agent is far more likely, as a human means, to effect the destruction of heathen idolatry, than a "Jewish peasant and a few fishermen," for such do Dr. Paley and other advocates, constantly designate Christ and his apostles, among whom they always include Paul, without the least

¹ Paley's Evidences, Edenburgh ed. 1823. Vol. 2. page 366.

distinction, that the effect appearing to be without an adequate cause may be the more surprising; but Paul is not to be confounded with ordinary mortals, his body, indeed, might be confined, as it often was, with bolts and bars, or fastened by a chain to a Roman soldier, but his mind was too elastic to be compressed by any human power.

As an orator he has no equal, for from the extraordinary nature of his subject, the peculiar earnestness of his manner, and a sublime enthusiasm never before united with such purity of morals, and soundness of judgment, he engages the heart, captivates the understanding, and never fails to command our sympathy; witness the universal submission to his authority, the general adoption of his thoughts and expressions, which even the most barbarous dialect cannot disguise; for what preacher in every age and country, owes not the most sublime parts of his discourse to Paul? How cold and insipid would not their compositions often appear, if divested of the animated sentiments and glowing language of this great master.

Yet Paul was not a follower of Christ from the beginning, nor a witness of his miracles. and although we might suppose he would be anxious to receive all the information that could be obtained respecting Christ and his doctrines, it appears he did not immediately, on his conversion, associate with the other apostles, nor own himself indebted to them for his knowledge of the Gospel, for he thus writes:—

“Paul an apostle, not of man, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.” Verse 15. “When it pleased God to reveal his son to me, that I might preach him among the Heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia, and returned again into Damascus; only after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.”

Thus we see Paul assuming the character of an apostle, without regard to the sanction of his brethren, and if we except, what he himself states, that he was *supernaturally* commissioned to preach to the Gentiles, we shall not discover from the words of Christ, nor from the example and practice of the other apostles, that he had any authority for this step; yet his influence among them appears to have been unbounded, he speaks to Peter and the other apostles in a tone of the

highest authority, his dictates are those of a master, and they submit, without a murmur, to whatever he is pleased to command. "But when Peter was come to Antioch I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed, for before that certain persons came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself fearing them which were of the circumcision; and the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, inso-much that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation: but when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel³, I said unto Peter, before them all, if thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews⁴:" and a little before, speaking of those "false brethren (no doubt certain persons who came from James, as above) to spy out the liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, to whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour, but of those who seem to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me, God accepteth no man's person, for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me⁵." Thus we see Paul with the most complele self-possession, over-rule the resolutions of the other apostles, and prescribe to them whatever his fancy suggests; before him, if I may so say, their "genius is rebuked;" and without any other influence than the great superiority of his mind, if we except, perhaps, the stipulation which they make, "that he would send something to their poor at Jerusalem⁶," he compels them silently to acquiesce in, if not to sanction, a measure, to which they appear to have been extremely averse, namely, that he should preach the Gospel to the Gentiles; a measure too, in opposition to the express command of Christ; a command still fresh in their mind, and too plain to be misunderstood. "These twelve Jesus sent forth and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans, enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of Israel⁷," and what was still more opposed to the prejudices of their education, he insists that he should be allowed to preach the *gospel* to these Gentiles, without regard to the ceremonies of the law, or to the solemn institutions of Moses⁸.

³ *Gospel*, that is the Gospel which he himself preached, for what we call the Gospel was not yet published, see M'Knight, *ad locum*.

⁴ Galatians, chap. ii. ver. 11. ⁵ Galatians, chap. ii. vers. 4 to 6.

⁶ Gal. chap. ii. ver. 10. ⁷ Matt. x. ver. 5. ⁸ Gal. chap. ii. vers. 14 to 16.

But how does it appear that Paul possessed any advantage either of education or talents over the rest, for he himself disclaims all kind of superiority, he calls himself the least of the apostles and not worthy to be called an apostle, he says "Christ sent me to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect," and again, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty⁹." &c. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, &c. For I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, &c. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of men's wisdom¹⁰."

But if it shall appear that Paul, besides his great natural genius, was a most accomplished scholar, that he was familiar with the Greek and Hebrew languages, and acquainted with all the learning of the age; we shall be compelled to consider the above as the effect of his extreme modesty, or perhaps as one of those figures of rhetoric practised by every orator¹¹.

Born in Tarsus, the metropolis of Cilicia, which as a place of education, Strabo informs us, excelled all other Grecian Cities¹²; not excepting Athens and Alexandria for its schools of philosophy and the polite arts, therefore he had reason to say, "I am a man who am a Jew of Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city¹³:" his being a Roman in right of his father¹⁴ with the care and expence bestowed on his education, is a proof that his family were in opulent circumstances, he terms himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and we may presume (says M'Knight) that the language of the family was Hebrew, yet having passed the first years of his life in Tarsus, a Greek city, he must have been familiar with the Greek language from his infancy." This indeed evidently appears from his epistles, "from which we may perceive says, the same learned writer, that he had a general knowledge of the learning, the religion, the manners and customs of the Greeks, and that he had read some of their best authors." And, if he was well acquainted with the learning of the Greeks he was still

⁹ 1 Corinthians, chap. i. vers. 17 and 27.

¹⁰ Chap. ii. ver. 1 and 4.

¹¹ "Rude am I in speech,

And little blest with the set phrase of peace,
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself: yet, by your patience,
I will a round unvarnished tale deliver."

OTHELLO.

¹² Lib. xix.

¹³ Acts, xxi. ver. 39.

¹⁴ Acts, xxii. ver. 28.

better acquainted with that of the Jews, for his parents sent him early to Jerusalem, to study under Gamaliel the most celebrated doctor of his time; who for his great knowledge and virtue "was had in reputation among the people¹⁵." And how greatly he profited by his instructions, we learn from himself. "Born in Tarsus, yet brought up in this city, Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the Fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day¹⁶, and profited in Judaism above many of my equals, of my own nation being more exceedingly zealous of the tradition of the fathers¹⁷."

But a few short extracts from his own writings will, we conceive, prove his claim to the character of an accomplished scholar, and fine writer, better than any thing that can be said in his praise; and this, we shall do at random; only avoiding those more lengthened and formal orations, made in his own defence, before King Agrippa, and the Roman Governors, Felix, and Festus¹⁸; the account of his conversion before the chief captain, and people assembled in the temple, and his still more dexterous, though more irregular, because interrupted defence, before the chief priest and counsel¹⁹, on every one of these occasions he displayed wonderful address, and completely baffled his adversaries; and although they are all admirable and cannot be too often read, yet as they are pretty well known and of considerable length, I shall satisfy myself with a few extracts from his occasional effusions; and the only difficulty is out of so much that is excellent, which to select.

I shall begin with a few passages from his epistle to the Ephesians chap. iii. ver. 14, "for this cause I bow my knees to the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family of Heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, &c.

"Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us unto him, be glory in the Church by Jesus Christ through an endless succession of ages." In this

¹⁵ Acts, v. ver. 34.

¹⁶ Acts, xxii. ver. 3.

¹⁷ Gal. i. ver. 14.

¹⁸ Acts, xxiv. to xxvi.

¹⁹ Acts, xxii. &c.

doxology, I have adopted a few expressions from M'Knight's translation, thinking it more agreeable to the original which is exceedingly sublime, and it has been observed by Grotius concerning the greater part of this epistle, "that it expresses the grand matters of which it treats, in language more sublime, than ever was uttered by the tongue of man;" but this is to be understood only of the original Greek, indeed our translation is become so trite, the terms are not only obsolete, but sometimes obscure; whence it may easily be conceived to come far short of the original, both in elegance and emphasis; for many of the compound terms used by the apostle possess a harmony and expression which it is impossible to convey in any modern language; however I shall confine myself to the common version. In the first chapter of the same epistle; after telling them that he had heard of their faith, he breaks out in the following prayer:—"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his goodness to us, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come." "Finally brethren be strong in the lord and in the power of his might, put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places; wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand, stand therefore having your loins girded about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, above all taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God²⁰." Also the whole of the eighth chapter to the Romans in which both the sentiments and language, are transcendently sublime, especially towards the close. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that

²⁰ Ephesians, vi. ver. 10.

died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord²¹."—Also his speech to the inhabitants of Lystra²², "in which, says M'Knight, the justest sentiments concerning the Deity are expressed in such beautiful simplicity of language as must strike every reader of taste. His oration to the Athenian magistrates and philosophers assembled in the Areopagus, wherein he describes the character and state of the true God, and the worship that is due to him, in the most eloquent language, and with the most exquisite address. His charge to the elders of Ephesus²³, which is tender and pathetic in the highest degree; his different defences before the Roman governors Felix and Festus, King Agrippa, and Berenice, the tribunes and great ladies of Cesaræa, who were struck with admiration at the apostle's eloquence."

But it is not only in set discourses, and orations, which might be premeditated, that his powers, as an orator, are observable; but also in those extempore effusions which arise from the occasion, as in the defence just referred to, the Roman Governor interrupted him, and "said with a loud voice, Paul thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad; but he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness;" and on the same occasion his reply to the King, who said to him, "Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," is equally happy, but the last observation is peculiarly so: "And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether, such as I am except these bonds," for it appears he was in chains.

The eleventh and twelfth chapters of second Corinthians "are full of the most delicate and fine ironies against the false teacher who opposed him at Corinth," who reduced him to the necessity of speaking of himself.

²¹ Romans viii. ver. 33.

²² Acts xiv.

²³ Acts xx.

“ I speak as concerning reproach as though we had been weak; howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ, I speak as a fool, I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day have I been in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must glory, I will glory in the things that concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not²⁴.” The fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, where he speaks of the resurrection of the dead “is,” says the same excellent author, “altogether very beautiful, and perhaps in no language is there to be found a passage of equal length more truly sublime:” but a verse or two will suffice to remind the reader of the subject,—“Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. So that when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” Then follows that beautiful apostrophe. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory²⁵?” But I must refer to the text.

Again, the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians, where he treats of charity, or, as it might with more propriety be rendered, benevolence or love, is so well known that it only requires to be mentioned:—“Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, &c. &c.

²⁴ II Corinthians, xi. ver. 21.

²⁵ I Corinthians, xiii. ver. 51.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth," &c. &c.

But Paul does not always indulge in the declamatory style, for we meet with frequent examples of the chastest composition; and the three last chapters of the Ephesians alone, contain a complete system of the purest morality, in the most engaging and affectionate language.

"I therefore beseech you," says he, "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love²⁶." The whole of this chapter is in the same strain, and I find it impossible to extract a single passage more without copying the whole. Also fourth Philippians fourth verse;—"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

"There are other passages," says M^r Knight, "of a narrower compass, concerning which I hazard it as my opinion that in none of the celebrated writers of Greece and Rome are there periods in which we find greater sublimity of thought, or more propriety, beauty, or even melody of language; this," says the Doctor, "every reader of taste will acknowledge who takes the pains to consult the following passages in the original:—"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God²⁷," &c. II Corinthians, iv. and 17,—"For our light afflictions which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," &c.; and chapter v. and 14,—"For the love of Christ constraineth us," &c.; and chapter vi. and 4,—which I shall transcribe to show with what facility the apostle can vary the expression, when he has

²⁶ Ephesians, iv.

²⁷ Romans, xi. ver. 33.

occasion to convey the same sentiments,—“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” See also I Timothy, vi. and 15,—where is a description of God, which for sublimity of sentiment and beauty of language, exceeds all the descriptions given of the supreme being by the most famous of the heathen philosophers or poets,—“Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”

“Other periods might be produced,” says M^r Knight, “in which, as in those just now mentioned, there are no unnatural rants, no great swelling words of vanity, but a real grandeur of sentiment and an energy of diction which directly strike the heart, and I heartily agree with Beza in the account which he hath given of the apostle Paul as a writer; “When I more narrowly consider the whole genius and character of Paul’s style I must confess that I have found no such sublimity in Plato himself, as often as the apostle is pleased to thunder out the mysteries of God, &c. No exquisiteness of vehemence in Demosthenes equal to his,” &c. &c.

If then the sentiments of Paul are so divine, if he has spoken in a language which has no parallel among ancient and modern orators, if the best and most pathetic discourses in every tongue, from his own time to the present, owe their whole power and emphasis to him, so that what was said of Plato might perhaps with more propriety be said of him, “that if the Gods were to speak in the language of men they would speak in the language of Paul,” we must surely conclude he was inspired; “*nemo unquam magnus sine divino afflato fuit*,” Cicero who himself possessed a large share of the spirit of inspiration, says, there never was a

great man without being inspired.”—In this sense Paul certainly possessed a large portion of inspiration; but if we look upon the other apostles and Evangelists²⁸ as inspired too, we shall be obliged to acknowledge that sublime writing and eloquence are not the necessary characteristics of inspiration. Let us compare Paul’s epistles with the gospels in general, particularly John’s narrative of the raising of Lazarus²⁹, his history of the resurrection and appearance of Jesus already alluded to; Mark’s account of Christ cursing the fig tree, or his description of sending the devils into the herd of swine. Let us compare Paul’s system of morals largely diffused throughout his works, but especially in the three last chapters of his epistle to the Ephesians, with the much-famed sermon on the mount; and we shall be obliged to confess the vast distance there is between a great and accomplished orator and “illiterate peasants;” or, that fine writing is not the invariable criterion of inspiration³⁰. Now without inquiring into the particular degree of Paul’s inspiration; we may, without any violation of the strictest rules of philosophy, admit, without miracle, that Paul was the first of preachers, as Homer was the first of poets, or Sir Isaac Newton the first of astronomers; however it cannot be doubted, that he was peculiarly qualified, by his education, for propagating a new system of faith; instructed from his infancy in the religion of Moses, his mind being early imbued with the most exalted ideas of the Deity, he could not fail to be highly inimical to the heathen worship; as a Jew his very prejudices were opposed to polytheism, and if we consider the peculiar frame of his mind and his character, we need not wonder at the zeal which he manifested on all occasions for the overthrow of idolatry; and, although, it must be con-

²⁸ It cannot be fairly alleged that Paul’s *supernatural* gifts were superior to those of the other apostles, for had they not received the gift of tongues at pentecost, and did they not also pretend to the power of working miracles? Yet Dr. M’Knight claims for Paul a higher degree of illumination than the others possessed; but to make this appear he must confound his natural gifts with his supernatural.

²⁹ John xi.

³⁰ There is a remarkable exception to this,—the parable of the prodigal is a delightful little story, but as it is only to be found in Luke’s gospel, it is natural to enquire how none of the other Evangelists, Christ’s immediate followers, have given it; for it is known that Jesus himself, like Socrates, left nothing in writing, it must therefore have been committed to memory by some person who heard him deliver it; of these Matthew or John is far more likely than Luke, who is rather to be considered as a disciple of Paul than of Jesus whom perhaps he had never seen. And as this has all the appearance of a regular composition it is more likely to proceed from the one school than the other.

fessed, that his zeal, perseverance, and sufferings have never been equalled in the history of the church, by missionaries of all persuasions, in any age or country; yet the accomplishment of this work was not so incredible and marvellous as we are led to suppose from the high coloured representations of some writers, for idolatry, then like Popery in our own country at the reformation³¹, had arrived at such a degree of corruption, such abuses were practised by priests and people in the name and by the example of their deities, that no individual possessing the least share of moral sensibility, could regard it without horror; and when Paul began his ministry the whole system was ready to fall to pieces by its own inherent rottenness, so that all men, except the Demetriuses, and those who were profitably employed about the temple of Diana at Ephesus or elsewhere, required only to be informed of a purer system to make them cordially embrace it.

However it is by no means my design to depreciate the exertions of Paul, on the contrary he ought to be considered as principally instrumental in propagating and establishing that system of faith which has ever since prevailed in the world; for it must be confessed that the whole frame and constitution of Christianity was modelled by him; to him it owes its form and consistency; it is to him alone that we are indebted for our knowledge of Christ as a mediator, the doctrine of the atonement, and the calling of the the Gentiles³²." How infinitely does he exalt the character

³¹ In the time of Luther, or of Knox, so great were the abuses that prevailed in the Romish church, that the reformers had only to give the signal to the people, disgusted as they were with the corruption of the clergy, to make them renounce that clergy and their doctrines for ever; and although Catholics at present will tell us that it was owing to these *firebrands* alone that the *deformation* was occasioned, yet they forget that the people were born Papists and educated in Popish principles, and if their clergy had not been extremely corrupt they never would have deserted them.

³² I beg to refer the reader to Dr. M'Knight who is very full and satisfactory, as well as perfectly scriptural on this subject. Epistles, vol. I. p. 53. But I have only room for the heads of his argument:—

"I have said that Paul excelled his brethren the apostles by reason of the abundance of the revelations that were given to him." At the same time he says, "I do not mean that Paul's discourses and writings are superior in point of authority to those of the other apostles. Nevertheless, it must be remembered, that it is St. Paul chiefly who in his epistles hath explained the gospel economy in its full extent. In confirmation of this account of the superior illumination of the apostle Paul, I now observe, that the greatness of the mercy of God as extending to all mankind was made known to him before it was discovered to the other apostles; namely, in the commission which he received to preach to the Gentiles at his con-

of Christ and his mission! The Evangelists tell us that Jesus himself said, "I can do nothing without my Father³³." "My Father is greater than all³⁴." "Call me not good, there is none good but one, that is God³⁵." "Of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father *only*³⁶."—Peter speaks of him as "a *man* approved of God³⁷." And he himself says, "Ye seek to kill me, a *man* who hath told you the truth³⁸."

And so far was he from authorizing his disciples to offer the gospel to the Gentiles, and from declaring the obligations of the law to be ended, that he says, "think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass away not one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled³⁹."

version, &c. So that he was the first of the apostles who by Christ's command declared that faith and not circumcision was necessary to salvation, &c. It is St. Paul," says he again, "who hath informed us that *sin and death were permitted to enter into the world by the disobedience of one man*, because God determined by the *obedience of a greater man* to bestow resurrection from the dead, &c. It is St. Paul who in his learned epistle to the Hebrews hath largely explained and proved the priesthood and intercession of Christ, and hath shewn that his death is considered by God as a sacrifice for sin, &c. It is this great apostle who hath most fully explained the doctrine of justification, and shewn that it consists in our being delivered from death, &c. through the obedience of Christ. It is St. Paul who, by often discoursing of the justification of Abraham, hath shewn the true nature of the faith which justifies sinners, &c. It is St. Paul who hath most largely discoursed concerning the transcendent nature of the Son of God above angels and all created beings whatever, &c. It is this great apostle who hath made known to us many of the circumstances and consequences of the general judgment not mentioned by the other apostles; for besides, respecting what Christ himself declared, that he will return a second time to this earth, &c. that he will call the dead forth from their graves, and by his sentence as judge fix the doom of all mankind irreversibly; this apostle hath taught the following interesting particulars: that the last generation of men shall not die, but that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, Christ will change such as are alive and remain, &c." Thus far M'Knight, and he might have added that Paul was the first to inform us, that the body is to be raised, not a natural but, a "*spiritual body*."

³³ John, v. ver. 19. ³⁴ John, x. ver. 29. ³⁵ Mark, x. ver. 18.

³⁶ Matthew, xxiv. ver. 36. ³⁷ Acts, ii. ver. 22. ³⁸ John, viii. ver. 40.

³⁹ Matthew, v. vers. 17, 18.—It appears that he was equally attentive to the ceremonial part; also Matthew, v. ver. 23., "If thou bring thy gift to the altar," says Christ, "and there remembereth that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Matthew, viii. ver. 4., "Go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded." "Whether is greater the altar, or the gift that is upon the altar?" &c. &c. Matthew, xxiii. ver. 19. "Swear not, nor by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great King." Matthew, v. ver. 35.

And to the twelve he says, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He also appears to have been peculiarly strict in his principles as a Jew, for he says to the woman at the well of Samaria, "Ye worship ye know not what, *we know what we worship*, salvation is of the Jews⁴⁰."

Indeed Paul at first in concurrence with these sentiments, tried to preach Christ in Judea, and even when he went to Antioch he addressed himself exclusively to the Jews; but when he found that he could make no impression upon them, and it is very remarkable that the very people among whom the miracles of Jesus were performed, and to whom we often refer as a standing proof of the truth of these miracles, do actually deny the facts. Paul, when he found his preaching disregarded by the Jews, exclaimed, "lo! we turn to the Gentiles⁴¹." And when he found himself among people who were unacquainted with the story, it was then he gave the full rein to his imagination, and exulting as it were in the consciousness of his mighty genius, and of his power over the hearts and understandings of men, he declares himself inspired; sometimes he is commanded to declare *this* from the Lord, and at other times he speaks as a man, he is snatched up into the third heaven, and hears things which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Jesus is exalted into a Deity and placed "at the right hand of God." "He thinks it no robbery to be equal with the Father." "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the God-head bodily⁴²." "To him all creatures in heaven and earth are to bow." "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him⁴³." And who is finally to judge the world.—Jesus himself indeed told his disciples that he is to judge the world, and speaks of dividing the *sheep* from the *goats*; the one is

⁴⁰ It may be objected, that Christ commanded his disciples to go and teach all nations, but if his ideas were like those of his countrymen, the world was confined within very narrow bounds; from "the river to the ends of the earth." "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" John vii. ver. 15. "The devil took him up into an exceeding high mountain, and shewed him *all the kingdoms* of the world." Matthew iv. ver. 8.

⁴¹ Acts xiii. ver. 46.

⁴² Colosians ii. ver. 9.

⁴³ Colosians i. vers. 15, 16.

to be set on the right hand, the other on the left, and every one to receive according to the deeds done in the body.

But Paul forms a new, and more attractive, scheme;—Christ is made the mediator between God and man. His death is an atonement and sacrifice for our sins, and we are justified by *faith alone*, without the works of the law; which many willingly interpret, without works of any kind; we are freed from our sins, made heirs of God, and joint heirs of Christ.

Now from these and innumerable other passages it is proved beyond all controversy, that Paul has conveyed to the Christian world, ideas, of the person of Christ, and of the gospel dispensation, which never could have been gathered from the words of Jesus, or from those of his immediate followers, Evangelists, and disciples⁴⁴. But what still more remarkably distinguishes the doctrine of Paul, is the peculiar opinion he entertained respecting the resurrection, and the *quality of body* that is to arise. “There is,” says he, “a natural body, and there is a spiritual body⁴⁵.” A *spiritual body*? but is not such a subtle and refined body, a near approximation to our idea of spirit? Before Paul published this doctrine, those who had seen Christ after he rose from the dead, who had eaten and drank in his company, and had heard him say, “handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have,” could not fail (if they believed in his miraculous resurrection at all) to be impressed with the opinion, that the resurrection of the body was essentially distinguished from the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Of this last, Socrates, Plato, Cicero, were fully persuaded from the light of nature; but with respect to the resurrection of the body, they were entirely ignorant; this is the peculiar, the distinguishing characteristic of the religion of Jesus, who having risen from the dead, and having appeared to his own disciples in the same body in which he had suffered on the cross, those, I say, who *believed* that he ascended into heaven in the same body, must have been persuaded, as “Christ was the first-fruits of them that slept,” that the bodies of the saints were to rise in the same state. But Paul who had never seen Christ, except by supernatural vision, had formed a different idea, and finding considerable difficulty to repel the objections of the philosophers of Athens and Corinth, who perplexed him with such questions as these:—“How are the dead raised?

⁴⁴ See preceding note from M^r Knight.

⁴⁵ I Corinthians xv. ver. 44.

and in what bodies do they appear?" He replies, "thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die;" and with respect to the human body he tells them, "it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." This is certainly very ingenious, and appears extremely plausible; but let us try to conceive the idea of a "*spiritual body*."

What is *body*? and what spirit? The only notion we have of a living body, is a material organized substance, possessing sense, and feeling, appetites, and passions. But *spirit*, if we have any distinct conception of it at all, is an entire abstraction from every thing material; therefore a "spiritual body" appears a contradiction in terms, for it seems as easy to imagine a *living* body of pure gold, of iron, or of steel, as a "spiritual body," with the feelings incident to this fabric of clay; and we can conceive no other idea of the resurrection of the body, as distinguished from the immortality of the soul, than that this material frame shall after death be restored to life with all the organs of sense, (as Jesus appeared,) and once more be united with the soul or spirit. It therefore remains to be considered, and I shall leave the consideration to the reader, whether Paul's doctrine contains in it any thing essentially different from the ancient doctrine of the soul's immortality; and if it shall appear that there is in reality no difference, for what is not body must be spirit.—If Paul, in his eagerness to refute the philosophers of Corinth, has refined a little too much upon the subject of the resurrection of the body, if not only in this but on several other important points, (referred to in the preceding pages,) he has improved upon the original; it may be asked, by what authority he has adopted a new scheme or engrafted on the old doctrines which have not been clearly promulgated by Jesus himself, nor have received the full sanction of his apostles. Indeed it is remarkable that he seldom refers to the miracles, as a proof of Christ's mission, nor to the sermon on the mount as the ground of his morality, which, as it proceeded from a source so divine, might be supposed to require neither addition, nor improvement at the hand of man; nor does he refer to the evidence of the other apostles except by saying, that they had seen Jesus after his crucifixion. And as he appears to have been fully satisfied in his own mind with what he saw on his journey to Damascus, so he seems to think the world should believe on his evidence alone; accordingly the first Gentile converts required no other; and Lord Lyttleton himself, thinks, "the conversion and apostleship

of Paul duly considered was *of itself* a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation." But without reference to the miracles of Christ, and the evidence of the other apostles, it may be doubted whether this be sufficient to satisfy minds of a less credulous cast; for Paul is but one witness, and liable himself like other men to be deceived; and it has been well observed by Dr. Paley, in reference to such visions as that which caused Paul's conversion, "that it is not necessary to admit as a miracle what can be resolved into a false perception; of this nature was the demon of Socrates, the visions of St. Anthony, and many others; the vision of Lord Herbert of Sherbury, and Colonel Gardner's vision⁴⁶, as related in his life written by Dr. Doddridge; all these may be accounted for by a momentary insanity, for the characteristic symptoms of human madness is the rising up in the mind of images not distinguishable by the patient from impressions on the senses⁴⁷. The cases however in which the possibility of this delusion exists, are for the most part cases of visions, or voices; the object is hardly ever touched, the vision submits not to be handled, one sense does not confirm another." And although the Doctor says, that Paul's vision does not come under this description, yet we apprehend it approaches nearer, or is more liable to these objections, than the appearances which Jesus made to his other disciples after his crucifixion, for they not only heard his voice, but they saw him, touched his body, and eat and drank with him.

Again, although the vast superiority of Paul, as a man of genius and a scholar over the other apostles, be admitted, yet we cannot allow, with M^r Knight, that he enjoyed a higher degree of illumination, for if he was master of several languages, had not they at Pentecost received the gift of tongues, and did they not also pretend to the power of working miracles? Notwithstanding which, he hesitates not to say, "if any man or angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which I have preached, let him be accursed." On this subject an ingenious but sceptical writer⁴⁸ has observed, "Paul entered a volunteer into the apostleship, at least his extraordinary vocation was known to none but himself. He went about preaching his gospel, as he called it, before he had any correspondence, or even acquaintance, with those who composed the church of Christ at that time, and when he came among them he took the

⁴⁶ See Life of Colonel Gardner.

⁴⁷ Batty on Lunacy.

⁴⁸ Bolingbroke's philosophical works, vol. III. p. 98.

air of a master, submitted to none, but controlled and reprimanded even the prince of the apostles, as the Catholics call Peter." Yet that Paul believed himself to be inspired, there is little room to doubt. That he had seen the light, and heard, or fancied he heard, a voice speaking to him (as he describes) on his journey to Damascus we willingly allow; indeed, Lord Lyttleton makes it pretty evident that he could not be absolutely either an impostor or enthusiast; but that a considerable portion of both these qualities are often united in the same character, experience plainly proves. We know that persons of an enthusiastic turn, easily reconcile to their own minds any little departure from the truth in the form of high colouring, when they think they are acting for the glory of God, or for the interests of religion and piety. Mrs. Johanna Southcote said, she thought she was actuated by a good spirit, at the same time she owned she might be deceived by a bad one: this appearance of candour, with her extraordinary pretensions to sanctity and divine lights, obtained her a very great number of followers, and she did not attempt to impose upon the medical men until she had by the enthusiasm of her mind, and by the diseased state of her body, first imposed upon herself; but the event destroyed all the hopes of her admirers, her prophecies were *not fulfilled*; this is an excellent criterion to "try the spirits" whether "they be of God." And if, on the same principle, we examine the pretensions of Paul, we shall not be much at a loss to form a just estimate of his character.

In reading his epistles we are struck with a most remarkable impression which he had received, and which he frequently repeats with the greatest confidence and solemnity, that Christ was immediately to return to call the dead from their graves, and to take those who were alive up with him into heaven.

In his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, he thus writes, "But I would not have you be ignorant brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not as those which have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him; for this we say unto you by *the word of the Lord*, that we which are alive, and remain to the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep, for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven which a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then *we which are alive and remain*

shall be caught up together with them into the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, wherefore comfort one another with these words⁴⁹," and again in the fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians, he says, "Behold I shew you a mystery, we shall not *all* sleep, but we shall all be *changed* in a moment," &c.

Those who feel more interest in the support of a system, than in the discovery of truth, fancy the inference to be drawn from the above is dangerous to their cause. Accordingly they have exerted their utmost ingenuity to contradict or invalidate this doctrine, but surely nothing can be plainer than that the apostle was himself persuaded, and wished to persuade others that Christ was immediately to appear: indeed, this is proved in the most satisfactory manner, not only from the whole of Paul's *authentic* writings, but also from the words of Christ himself and from the general scope and meaning of the whole of the New Testament.

It is further corroborated too, by the eager solicitude which prevailed among believers, soon after Paul's death; being equally at a loss, whether to contradict, or confirm it, but seeing that some qualification of this doctrine was absolutely necessary, the second Epistle of Peter, though well known to be spurious, was received by many as genuine, and at length admitted into the canon of scripture, and it appears to have been written for no other purpose than to do away the impression of Paul's positive declaration respecting the immediate coming of Christ. 2 Peter, chap. iii. verse 3. "Knowing this first that there shall come in the last days, scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the world." Verse 8. "But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day with the Lord, is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Verse 15. "And account that the long suffering of the Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul, also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other scriptures unto their own destruction." Is not this speaking rather plain for prophecy? "where is the promise of his coming," &c. Indeed all the writers of the second century, candidly acknow-

⁴⁹ 1 Thessalonians iv. ver. 13.

ledge that the second Epistle of Peter is spurious, Clemens, Ignatius, Irenæus, and Eusebius himself, in collecting their opinions, owns the same thing, but says it was admitted into the canon afterwards, on account of its supposed "*utility*⁵⁰."

We have already observed that the description of the general conflagration found in the second Epistle, has much the appearance of having been copied from Seneca: indeed it is not much like the rash untutored fisherman to say, that "the *unlearned* and *unstable* wrest this, and the other scriptures to their own destruction," for notwithstanding he might be of the number of those who received the gift of tongues; it is impossible to forget Peter warming himself at the fire, in the hall of the High Priest Caiphas, "of a truth this fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean," or "thy speech bewrayeth thee," says Matthew; "then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man." On seeing him stepping out of the boat to meet Jesus in the sea, or in the act of cutting off the ear of the Chief Priest's servant, we receive an impression which is not easily erased: what that impression is, it is easier to feel than describe, but we may say what it is not, the impression of, a learned man, or of a controversial writer.

The second Epistle to the Thessalonians too, appears to have been written with the same view, and is ascribed to Paul himself, which although not mentioned by Eusebius among the spurious Epistles, carries strong internal marks of being the production of a less fertile genius: it is extremely unlike the clear and explicit manner of Paul, and introduces terms and ideas which are not to be met with in all his other writings, such as the "man of sin, the son of perdition, the mystery of iniquity," &c.

In the second chapter, and second verse, the writer exhorts them, "that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, *nor by letter as from us*, as that the day of Christ is at hand, let no man deceive you by any means, for except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed the son of perdition," &c. Yet as if the writer was unwilling absolutely to contradict the promise of Christ's immediate appearance, he adds, verse 6, "and now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time, for the mystery of iniquity *doth already*

⁵⁰ Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, b. III. chap. iii. p. 72. folio. Quæ vero secunda appellatur, eam quidem inter Sacros novi testamenti libros non esse à majoribus, accepimus; sed tamen cum utilis esse videretur quam plurimis, una cum reliquis sacræ scripturæ libris studiosè lecta est."

work, only he who now letteth, will let until he be taken out of the way." This indeed is dark enough, and we have no occasion to complain, in this instance, of being too plain for prophecy, but if it mean any thing, it seems to imply that Christ would not appear until the man of sin, or mystery of iniquity was revealed ; but that the same mysterious personage, who is also termed Anti-Christ, had already made his appearance ; however John will best explain this, "little children, it is the last time, and as ye have heard that Anti-Christ shall come, even now are there many Anti-Christ, whereby ye know that it is the last time⁵¹." "And this is that spirit of Anti-Christ whereof ye have heard that should come, and now already is in the world⁵²." From all which, we may learn, that although the coming of Christ had been protracted beyond the time they had fondly hoped, yet that event could not be very distant, or rather, was expected every moment⁵³.

However, to any person who attentively considers the subject, little doubt can remain, that this second Epistle, like the second of Peter, was introduced to explain away the meaning of those passages, which speak of the immediate coming of Christ, and the only reason, perhaps, why this second Epistle of Paul has escaped being excluded like the second of Peter from the "*Omologoumena*" of Eusebius, is because, Paul's genuine Epistles are not particularized in the ancient catalogues, and it is only stated in general terms, that he wrote fourteen, therefore if the Hebrews be included in this number, as every scholar will allow it has the best claim, the second to the Thessalonians must be excluded, otherwise the number would be fifteen.

But there is an insinuation thrown out in this second Epistle as if the first were not genuine ; "nor by *letter as from us*," but no one can have any hesitation about the first, for not only are the language and sentiments of Paul conspicuous in every line, but the doctrine in question of Christ's immediate appearance, is explicitly stated in his fifteenth chapter to the Corinthians, and forms the most prominent feature of the rest of his writings.

Now, if Paul had been the author of this second epistle also, it is not to be conceived that he would have said any thing to affect the credit of the first, and if a forged letter, (as is pre-

⁵¹ 1 John ii. ver. 18.

⁵² Chap. iv. ver. 3.

⁵³ This has been the case more or less in every age of the church, especially at the end of the tenth century.—See Moshien.

tended⁵⁴) was in circulation, containing similar doctrines, he would have taken care to state the circumstance, and distinctly to point out wherein the forgery differed from the original; but this has not been done, therefore, as the first epistle is acknowledged as genuine by all men, it is difficult to believe that the second could have been written by Paul. Again, as the drift and design of this second of Paul are evidently the same as that of the second of Peter, and as this last was not acknowledged by the first Christians, the other becomes exposed to the same suspicion, because they both affect to call in question, if not absolutely to deny, a doctrine explicitly stated by Paul, by Jesus himself, and all the other Apostles. However, the danger of admitting the doctrine of Christ's immediate appearance was perceived, not only at that early period, but the advocates of Paul's system at present also, are fully aware of the difficulty, and have exerted their whole ingenuity to obviate it, and Dr. M'Knight who translates Paul's Epistles had given a summary of the arguments which have been used for that purpose, in his preface to second Thessalonians.

"Grotius, Lock, and others, (says he,) have affirmed that the apostles of Christ, believed the end of the world was to happen in their time; and that they have declared this to be their belief in various passages of their epistles: but these learned men and all who join them in that opinion, have fallen into a most pernicious error, for thereby they destroy the authority of the Gospel revelation, at least, so far as it is contained in the discourses and writings of the apostles, because, if they have erred in a matter of such importance, and which they affirm was revealed to them by Christ, they may have been mistaken in other matters also, where their inspiration is not more strongly asserted by them, than in this instance. In imputing this mistake to the apostles, the Deists have heartily joined the learned men above mentioned, because a mistake of this sort effectually overthrows the apostles pretensions to inspiration, it is therefore necessary to clear them from so injurious an imputation."

He then proceeds to advance some arguments for that purpose, but as our limits will not admit the Doctor's arguments at full length, we therefore beg leave to refer to the work; the following however will serve as a specimen:—"that before the day of judgment there was to be a great apostacy in religion, occasioned by the man of sin, &c. And as for the expressions (says he again) in the former

⁵⁴ See M'Knight on 2 Thessalonians.

epistle, which have been thought to imply that Paul believed the day of judgment at hand, we have showed that they are mere *rhetorical forms of expression*, which *ought not to have been made the foundation of a doctrine of this magnitude,*" &c.

But if words have any meaning, or if the plainest terms of our ordinary intercourse with mankind be not mere rhetorical forms of expression, and not to be taken in a literal acceptance; the following texts will convince the reader that the opinion of Locke and Grotius, although classed by the Doctor along with the malicious Deists, must inevitably be the opinion of every candid and judicious man; for my own part I have no object in view but the discovery of truth, pure, simple, abstract truth, unmixed with human systems and opinions; this has been my grand aim from the moment that reason first dawned in my mind, and as Paul says, "woe be to me if I preach not Christ;" I may say woe be to me if I follow not the truth, for let the consequence be what it may, I cannot abandon the pursuit; and I am happy to perceive that our most enlightened divines are daily becoming more liberal; for Doctor Chalmers, in his *Evidences of Christianity*, has observed, that "the philosopher should be prepared to follow the light of evidence, though it may lead him to conclusions the most painful and melancholy, he should train his mind to all the hardihood of abstract and unfeeling intelligence; he should give up every thing to the supremacy of argument, and be able to renounce without a sigh all the tenderest prepossessions of infancy, the moment that truth demands of him the sacrifice⁵⁵."

To begin with the seventh chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, which is wholly employed in shewing that as Christ was immediately to appear, all regard to worldly affairs, even those of the most important and indispensable nature, was now to be laid aside as quite superfluous. Verse 27, "Art thou bound unto a wife, seek not to be loosed; art thou loosed from a wife, seek not a wife." Verse 7, "For I would that all men were even as I; (verse 8,) I say therefore unto the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I." The apostle's reason for these injunctions will appear at the 29th verse; "but this I say brethren the time is short, it remaineth that they that have wives be as if they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they

⁵⁵ Chapter i. p. 21.

rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not," &c.: tenth chapter and 11th verse; "These things are written for our admonition upon whom the *ends* of the world are come." Hebrews ix. and 26, "but now once in the *end* of the world hath he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself; (verse 27,) and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Philippians iv. and 5, "let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand." I Timothy vi. and 13, "I give thee charge in the sight of God, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ:" which will be found by the context to mean, that Timothy was to keep himself chaste and sober, to be meek and patient, not till death, but unto the coming of Christ." 2 Timothy iv. and 1, "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the *living*⁵⁶ and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; (verse 6,) for I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." This text has been adduced by some commentators to prove that Paul expected his death was at hand, and therefore that he could not believe that he was to be of the number of those who were to remain to the coming of Christ, but the context will not admit of this interpretation, for he adds, "there is laid up for me a crown, &c. and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing." However as this is allowed to have been written shortly before his death, his mind may have undergone a slight degree of change, from the time that he wrote the first epistle to the Thessalonians, iv. chapter and 15, "for this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, &c. shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." I Corinthians, xv. and 51, "we shall not all sleep, (die) but we shall all be changed," &c. (xi. and 26,) "for as often as ye eat this bread, &c. ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come." Several other passages might be taken from Paul's epistles to the same effect, but let us hear the other apostles; James v. and 7, "be patient therefore brethren unto the coming of the Lord; (8,) 'stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." I John ii. and 18, "little children it is the last time, and as ye have heard that anti-

⁵⁶ The common version makes this text rather obscure, being rendered the quick and the dead, but M'Knight translates it the *living*, &c. which is the literal meaning of the word *zontas*.

Christ shall come, even now are there many anti-Christes, wherefore ye know it is the last time :” also verse 28, “when he shall *appear*, &c. and not be ashamed before him at his *coming*.” 1 Peter iv. and 7, “but the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer.”

But the words of Christ himself are still more express, Matthew xxiv. and 29, “immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, (30,) and then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven, &c. and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet,” &c. Verse 33, “so likewise when ye shall see these things, know that it is near even at the door, verily I say unto you this generation shall not pass, till all be fulfilled ; heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away ;—also in the xvi. chapter and 27th verse, “Christ says there be some standing here that shall not taste of death till they see the son of man coming in his kingdom.” John xxi. and 22, after his resurrection, he said, “if I will that he tarry till *I come*, what is that to thee? (23,) then went this saying abroad amongst the brethren, that that disciple should not die,” &c. : and to the twelve, he says before his death, Matthew x. and 23, “ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the son of man be come.” See also the last words of the book of Revelations ; “he which testifieth these things saith surely I come quickly. Amen ! so come Lord Jesus.”

* * * * *

Hic hiatus est valde deflendus.

Here the notes of my deceased friend conclude without recapitulation or inference, to which I shall not attempt to add a syllable, only to express my hope that they may soon be replied to and satisfactorily refuted.

THE END.

PUBLICATIONS BY JOHN HUNT,
*No. 22, Old Bond Street; and No. 38, Tavistock Street,
Covent Garden.*

Dec. 1823.

WORKS PREPARING FOR PUBLICATION.

I.

Octavo, sewed.

THE DEFORMED TRANSFORMED, a Drama. By
the Right Honourable Lord BYRON.

II.

In one vol. 8vo.

The POSTHUMOUS WORKS of the late PERCY B.
SHELLEY, Esq.

CONTAINING

The Witch of Atlas.

Julian and Maddalo.

Triumph of Life.

Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude.

TRANSLATIONS.—The Cyclop, a Silenic Drama, from Eurypides. Homer's Hymn to Mercury. The Symposium and Ion of Plato, &c.

Letters from Italy: and smaller Poems.

III.

VOLTAIRE'S PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY.

It is a remarkable circumstance, while so many of the inferior productions of Voltaire have been given to the English reader in numerous editions, and among them even those dramas and poems which lose their characteristic merit in translation,—that a work of such high talent, such abundant wit, such delightful variety of amusement, and so peculiarly adapted to the author's powers, as the Philosophical Dictionary, should never have adorned the literature of the English language. For we cannot admit that a meagre and ill-selected abridgment, containing not a TENTH PART of the original, forms any exception to the remark.

The present Work is intended to supply this deficiency by an entire Translation of the Volumes which are so popular in France and throughout the Continent, under the title of the **PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY**. It will be neatly printed in foolscap octavo, and is calculated to form six Volumes. One Volume will appear every two months, containing about 500 closely-printed pages, price 8s. boards. The First Volume, embellished with a Head of Voltaire, and a Vignette after Stothard, will be published in January, 1824.

The names of Subscribers will be received by all respectable Booksellers.

IV.

In a few days, 8vo. price 2s. 6d.

ULTRA-CREPIDARIUS; a Satire on William Gifford.
By LEIGH HUNT. With Notes, containing Proofs and Illustrations.

Worth makes the man and want of it the fellow,
The rest is all but leather and prunella.—POPE.

Assume a barbarous tyranny, to handle
The Muses worse than Ostrogoth or Vandal;
Make them submit to verdict and report,
And stand or fall to th' orders of a court.—BUTLER.

WORKS JUST PUBLISHED.

I.

In 8vo. price 12s. boards,

NOT PAUL BUT JESUS; containing an Examination of the Question, how far we are warranted by the History in considering that which Paul calls "his Gospel," as forming part and parcel of the Religion of Jesus.

II.

In 8vo. sewed, price 2s.

On the **LAW** of **LIBEL**; with a detailed Exposure of the Special Jury System; and Strictures on the self-styled "Constitutional Association."

III.

In 8vo. price 2s. 6d.

THE NEW TRIAL of the **WITNESSES**, or the **RESURRECTION** of **JESUS** considered on principles understood and acknowledged equally by Jews and Christians; with an Enquiry into the Origin of the Gospels and the Authenticity of the Epistles of Paul.

"The Lord Chief Justice said, the Defendant was not called upon to answer for any reasonable or fair discussion on the truth of Christianity in general or any of its particular tenets; the Law permitted that every subject, however sacred, should be freely, yet moderately and temperately, discussed."—Mrs. Wright's Trial, Court of King's Bench, 1822.

IV.

In 8vo. sewed, price 2s. 6d.

IRELAND; a Satire.

Thus much I have dared to do;—how far my lay
Hath wronged these righteous times, let others say!
This let the world, that knows not how to spare,
Yet seldom blames unjustly, now declare!—Lord **BYRON**.

V.

Uniform with the 8vo. edition of Lord Byron's Works, price 1 Guinea, bds.

THE LIBERAL.

This work, being discontinued as a periodical, is now complete in Two Volumes; containing

The Vision of Judgment.

Heaven and Earth, a Mystery.

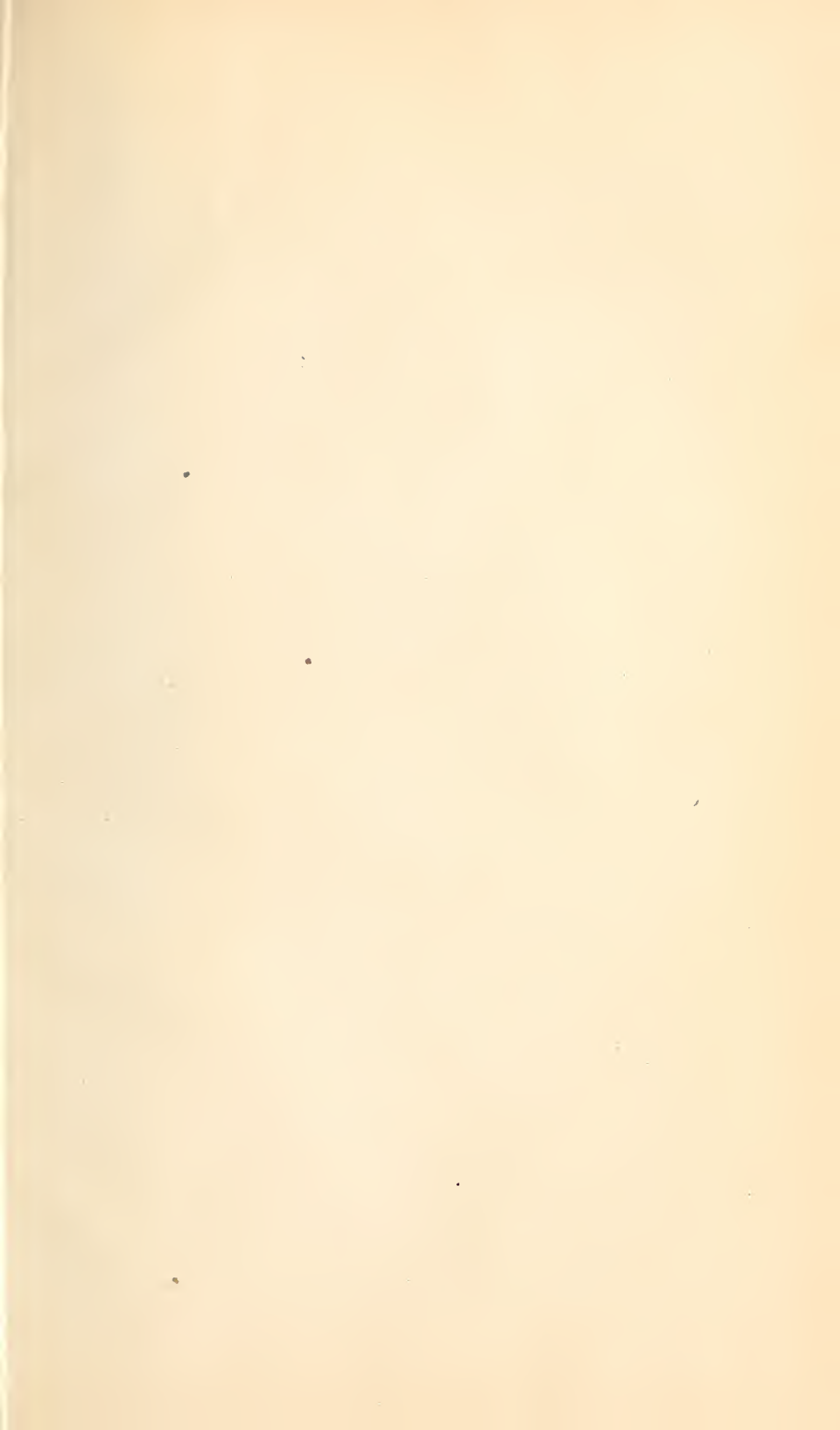
The First Canto of Pulci's Morgante Maggiore, translated into English Verse; and a number of other Poems, Essays, and Miscellanies.


VI.

In one vol. royal quarto.

TWENTY ENGRAVINGS of Lions, Tigers, Panthers, and Leopards, by **THOMAS LANDSEER**, from Drawings by **EDWIN LANDSEER** and **EDGAR SPILSBURY**.

Prints	-	£1	5	0	-	-	-	-	Tinted ditto	-	£1	11	6
Proofs	-	2	2	0	-	-	-	-	Tinted ditto	-	2	8	6

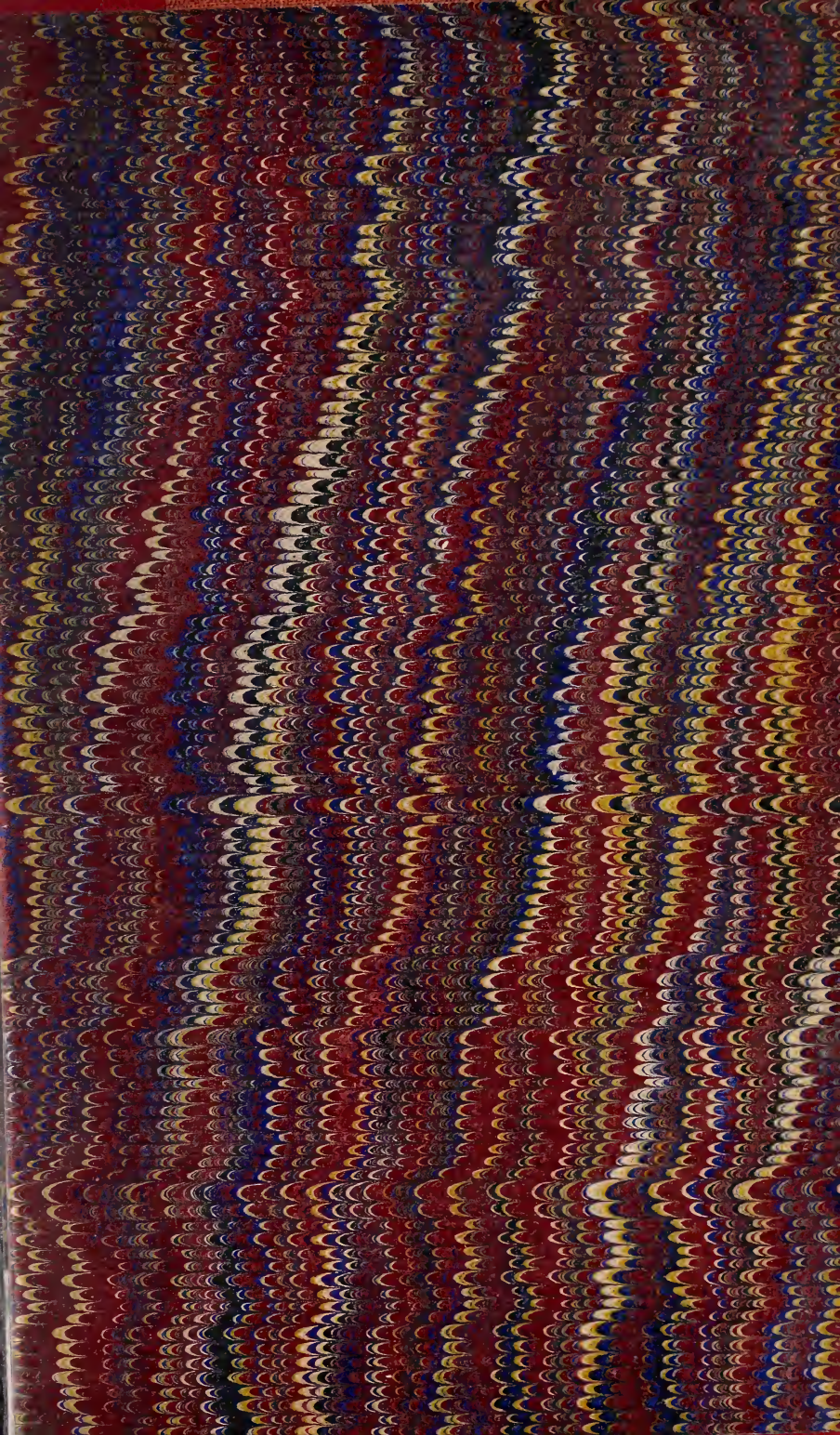




Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: July 2005

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 229 947 1